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The "Teaching of English" Series

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A SHORTER MILTON

No. 197

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A SHORTER MILTON

Selected and Edited by
F. J. TICKNER, B.A. (OXON.)



THOMAS NELSON & SONS, LTD.
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK

First published in this series, December 1935
Reprinted, November 1938

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INTRODUCTION

JOHN MILTON was born in London on December 9, 1608, eight years before the death of William Shakespeare ; and he died on November 8, 1674, fourteen years after the restoration of Charles II., and three years after John Dryden had been made poet laureate.

It is only natural that Milton should have found inspiration in the work of his great Elizabethan predecessors. He himself acknowledged his allegiance to Edmund Spenser, the author of the *Faerie Queene*, and at the age of twenty-two he wrote an *Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare*, whom he called ' Dear son of memory, great heir of fame.' He was not, however, concerned with continuing any literary tradition ; nor did he associate himself with the contemporary school of metaphysical poets. He was a great enough man to seek out his own path rather than follow in the footsteps of others, and in his last years, when a new generation of poets, among them John Dryden, had come on the scene, Milton was still pursuing his own majestic way.

As a child, Milton was an eager scholar, clever beyond others of his age, and as he grew older his passion for study continued. His main interests were Greek and Roman literature, theology, and history, both ancient and modern ; but there were no limits to the pains he would take to increase his fund of learning, and at every turn his poems show his vast knowledge of a variety of subjects.

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His learning naturally influenced his poetry. In *Paradise Lost*, for example, he writes in blank verse, the metre used by Shakespeare for his plays; but Milton's blank verse is more studied. Allusions to classical literature or to the Bible are frequent; often a single word has a wealth of learned meaning, and Milton is much more influenced than Shakespeare by the Latin blank verse of Virgil. In *Samson Agonistes* his model was not his fellow-countrymen Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, but the Greek writers of tragedy—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

Moreover, Milton lived in some of the most stirring times in English history. When he was thirty-four the Civil War broke out between Charles I. and Parliament, and seven years later the king was beheaded in Whitehall. Milton threw in his lot with the Parliamentary party, and not only devoted his energy and literary talents to the Puritan cause, but also hastened the loss of his own eyesight in his zeal.

In these years there is an interesting contrast between Milton and the Elizabethans. The sonnet, which was to his predecessors a medium for the passionate expression of the poetry of love, was used by him to express personal sentiments, to praise prominent politicians, and even to discuss matters of controversy. One sonnet addressed to his 'late espoused saint,' Katherine Woodcock, the second wife whom, because of his blindness, he never saw, is an exception, and comes nearer to the original purpose of sonnet writing.

The zeal for politics and religion which dragged Milton into controversy, set him to work at the Foreign Office, kept him almost entirely from writing poetry for twenty years, and accelerated his blindness, was zeal for a losing cause, for a cause which, at any rate for the time being, was overwhelmed by the restoration of King Charles II. in

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1660. In those days, when political arguments were often carried on by force, he was lucky to escape the revenge of bigoted opponents. For fourteen years he lived in quiet obscurity, and devoted himself to writing some of the noblest poetry in the English language.

Milton's life was thus divided into three periods : for the first thirty years he was the eager student and the poet ; for the next twenty-two the politician and the pamphleteer ; and for the last fourteen once more the poet, when the 'good old cause' of his politics seemed dead.

As a young man he was good looking and had considerable charm of manner. His father had been disinherited by Catholic parents for turning Protestant, and adopted the profession of a scrivener, which brought him a comfortable income. He was thus able to give young John a good education at St. Paul's School, London, and Christ's College, Cambridge, and to maintain him in retirement at Horton in Buckinghamshire in the leisured position of a student of literature for five years, as well as to send him on a lengthy tour of Italy. The elder Milton was also a musician of considerable ability, and there is no doubt that as a poet his son owed a good deal to his father's instruction in music. Although the worthy scrivener was, perhaps at times, treated in a rather patronizing way by his intellectually brilliant son, John showed real affection for the father who had done so much for him, and he dutifully provided for him in his old age.

At college Milton, who had no doubts as to his ability as a scholar, seems to have suffered from intellectual conceit. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was unpopular among his tutors, whom he regarded for the most part as men of inferior ability, and among his fellow students, who nicknamed him 'the Lady of Christ's,' in reference to his fastidious-

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ness and his good-looking, but delicate, appearance. Later some of his early unpopularity wore off, and people who came to know him well spoke kindly of his refined, courteous, and agreeable disposition.

In the years of his stay at Horton, between the time when he left Cambridge and his journey to the Continent in 1638, Milton wrote the most beautiful of his shorter poems : *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. When he returned to England, instead of going back to his country retreat at Horton he went to live in London, undertook the task of educating his nephews, and plunged into political and theological writing. Apart from a few political sonnets, he published no more poetry of importance until after the Restoration.

Some of Milton's admirers have regarded his prose works as occupying an unfortunate interlude in his life as a poet ; but those who have the time to read them, and the understanding to follow Milton through the sordid wrangles of politics and theology, are rewarded by finding in them noble passages of English prose. They complete the picture of Milton as a man who followed eagerly and sincerely the important issues which agitated the England of his day. He was attracted by the force of events, which seemed to him to be leading his country to the triumph of liberty and right over tyranny and arbitrary government. As the struggle went on he became a profound admirer of Cromwell, the man of action, whom he was proud to serve in the capacity of Latin secretary, his duties being to write letters of State in that language, which at that time was used for correspondence with foreign powers. At an early stage in the Civil War he wrote *Areopagitica* in defence of the freedom of the Press.

The victory of Parliament and the triumph of the Lord Protector, whom he so much admired, did not

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obscure from Milton the fact that the principles for which he fought to some extent suffered in the struggle. In spite of his energetic writing against monarchy and the bishops and his appointment as Latin secretary, the classical student and writer of *Comus* must sometimes have seemed strange company for the sterner Puritans and the buff-coated soldiers of the Protectorate.

Another event which fits strangely into Milton's life is his marriage, in 1643, to Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royalist family. Quite apart from the difference in their politics, the marriage was not a success. We have only Milton's account to judge from, and in controversy he was never inclined to make much allowance for the other person's point of view. Whatever the facts or the merits of the case may have been, Mary went back to her parents very shortly after her marriage, and her husband wrote three extremely bitter pamphlets on divorce. But here again Milton shows his generosity, for, two years later, he not only became reconciled with his wife, but took her Royalist family under his protection and found room for them in his house, although he complained that they stunned him with their noise.

Milton lived seven years with his wife after their reconciliation, and they had three daughters. In 1656, four years after her death, he married Katherine Woodcock, but she died fifteen months later. In spite of this brief spell of happy married life with his second wife, the memory of his first impressions dominated his outlook on women and on marriage. Mary seems to have been intellectually quite unsuitable to her learned husband, and so in his later poems man is the superior being, who meets his downfall through his association with woman : Adam in *Paradise Lost* is tempted by the less constant Eve, and in *Samson Agonistes*, Samson is beguiled by the

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shallow and deceitful Dalila. Nevertheless, in his old age, Milton was married yet a third time, to Elizabeth Minshull, who looked after the bodily comforts of her helpless and blind husband.

His blindness became complete in 1651, the year of Cromwell's final triumph at Worcester. During the last years of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, Milton reconciled himself to the loss of his eyesight and enjoyed a period of serenity. Physically, apart from his blindness, he was still in his prime ; an observer speaks of his ' beautifull and well proportioned body.' To these years belong his second and more fortunate marriage. He had high hopes of the Commonwealth which he cherished even after Cromwell's death. His thoughts turned again to poetry, and he embarked on *Paradise Lost*, an epic with the ambitious theme of the creation and the fall of man ; of the events which preceded the creation, the expulsion of Satan and the rebel angels from Heaven ; and of the story of the world after the fall.

Paradise Lost thus embraces the whole of space, time, and eternity ; and Milton seems already to have accomplished some of his stupendous task, when the Restoration, and the end of all his political hopes, came as a sudden and overwhelming blow. The earlier books of the poem have an action and a vigour which is absent from the later part. The first part of the story tells of the fall of Satan and his angels from Heaven, and its vigorous movement has led some critics to regard Satan as the real hero of the poem. The later books, which were completed after Milton had recovered from the shock of the Restoration, are in a more contemplative mood, and are handicapped by the fact that the real central figures of the story, Adam and Eve, remain passive until their temptation by Satan moves them to an action which, unfortunately, has the direst consequences for them. Never-

Introduction

theless, Milton succeeds in writing a poem of rare beauty, which remains perhaps the greatest monument of English epic verse.

In his later years he published two more important works, in keeping with the more thoughtful mood of his political disappointment and disillusion ; *Paradise Regained*, which describes, on a briefer scale than *Paradise Lost*, the temptation of Christ in the Wilderness, and *Samson Agonistes*, a play in the manner of a Greek tragedy, about the Jewish hero in his blindness and captivity. In this, his last poem, Milton describes with an intensity, which is often a personal expression of his own feelings, the bitterness of blindness and defeat, and the ultimate conquest of the mind over the adversity of earthly misfortunes.

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ODE ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

I

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heav'n's eternal King,
Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring ;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

2

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high council-table,
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside ; and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal
clay.

3

Say Heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God ?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,

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To welcome him to this his new abode ;
Now while the Heav'n by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons
bright ?

4

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet :
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet ;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire,
From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd
fire.

The Hymn

I

It was the winter wild,
While the Heav'n-born child,
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies ;
Nature in awe to him
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize :
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun her lusty paramour.

2

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle Air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,

*Star-led wizards, The three Magi.
Gaudy trim, Holiday attire.*

The Morning of Christ's Nativity

And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw,
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

3

But he her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-ey'd Peace ;
She, crown'd with olive green, came softly
sliding
Down through the turning sphere
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing,
And waving wide her myrtle wand,
Age strikes a universal peace through sea and
land.

4

Nor war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around :
The idle spear and shield were high up hung ;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,
And kings sate still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

5

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began :

Harbinger, Forerunner.
(4,172)

Awful, Full of awe, awestruck.

A Shorter Milton

The winds with wonder whist
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed
wave.

6

The stars with deep amaze
Stand fixt in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warn'd them thence ;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespeak, and bid them go.

7

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new enlighten'd world no more should
need ;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burning axletree could
bear.

8

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row ;

Whist, Hushed.

Lucifer, The morning star, the planet Venus.

Orbs, Orbits, courses.

The Morning of Christ's Nativity

Full little thought they than,
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below ;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

9

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook ;
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took :
The air such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heav'nly
close.

10

Nature that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling ;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heav'n and Earth in happier union.

11

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shame-fac'd night
array'd ;

Than, Then.

Noise, Band, orchestra.

Cynthia's seat, Mount Cythrus in the island of Delos, the birth-place of Artemis, also called Cynthia, goddess of the moon.

Pan, The god of nature.

Close, Closing notes of a tune.

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The helmed Cherubim,
And sworded Seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings dis-
play'd,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes to Heav'n's new-born
Heir.

I2

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung ;
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanc'd world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the welt'ring waves their oozy channel
keep.

I3

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
(If ye have power to touch our senses so)
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time ;
And let the base of Heav'n's deep organ blow,
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th' angelic symphony.

Unexpressive, Inexpressible.

Sons of morning, Morning stars. In the Book of Job (xxxviii. 7) the morning stars are spoken of as singing together at the time of the creation.

Welt'ring, Rolling.

Spheres. The music of the spheres was made by the planets as they moved in their courses ; it was supposed that men could not hear this music because their hearts were not pure.

The Morning of Christ's Nativity

14

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,
And speckl'd Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould,
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering
day.

15

Yea Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Th' enamell'd arras of the rainbow wearing,
And mercy set between,
Thron'd in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissu'd clouds down
steering :
And Heav'n as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

16

But wisest Fate says no,
This must not yet be so,
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss ;
So both himself and us to glorify :
Yet first to those ychain'd in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through
the deep,

Arras, Tapestry hanging.

Ychain'd, Chained.

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17

With such a horrid clang
As on mount Sinai rang
 While the red fire, and smould'ring clouds out
 brake :
The aged earth aghast
With terror of that blast,
 Shall from the surface to the centre shake ;
When at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread
 his throne.

18

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
 But now begins ; for from this happy day
Th' old Dragon under ground
In straiter limits bound,
 Not half so far casts his usurped sway,
And wrath to see his kingdom fail,
Swindges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

19

The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the arched roof in words deceiv-
 ing.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.

Swindges, Swings.

Delphos. Apollo was the god of the sun. The oracle at Delphi was supposed to be inspired by him. The suggestion is that with the coming of Christ the oracle would cease to exist.

22

The Morning of Christ's Nativity

No nightly trance, or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetic
cell.

20

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament ;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edg'd with poplar pale,
The parting genius is with sighing sent ;
With flower-inwov'n tresses torn
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets
mourn.

21

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars, and Lemures moan with midnight
plaint ;
In urns, and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint ;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar Power foregoes his wonted
seat.

22

Peor, and Baalim,
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-batter'd god of Palestine,

Cell. The oracle was given in the inmost part of the temple, where an intoxicating vapour rose from the ground ; the priest or priestess sat in a trance caused by this vapour, and was supposed thereby to be inspired by Apollo.

Parting, Departing.

Genius, Guardian spirit.

Lars, Household gods.

Lemures, Shades of the dead.

Flamens, Priests.

Peor and Baalim, Phœnician gods.

23

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And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heav'n's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine,
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Tham-
muz mourn.

23

And sullen Moloch fled,
Hath left in shadows dread,
His burning idol all of blackest hue,
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue ;
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis haste.

24

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove, or green,
Trampling the unshower'd grass with lowings
loud :
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest,
Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud,
In vain with timbrell'd anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipp'd ark.

Ashtaroth, Syrian goddess of beauty.

Lybic Hammon, Egyptian god, protector of flocks and herds.

Thammuz, Adonis, a Syrian youth, beloved by Ashtaroth ; he died of a wound received from a boar.

Moloch, An idol, to whom children were sacrificed.

Isis, Egyptian goddess of the earth, wife of Osiris, the Nile god.

Orus, Egyptian sun god.

Anubis, Another Egyptian god, with the head of a dog.

Memphian, Belonging to Memphis, a city of Egypt.

The Morning of Christ's Nativity

25

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand,

The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn ;
Nor all the gods beside,
Longer dare abide,

Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine :
Our Babe to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damned
crew.

26

So when the sun in bed,
Curtain'd with cloudy red,

Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to th' infernal jail,
Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave,
And the yellow-skirted fayes,
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-
lov'd maze.

27

But see the Virgin blest,
Hath laid her Babe to rest.

Time is our tedious song should here have
ending,
Heav'n's youngest teemed star
Hath fixt her polish'd car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attend-
ing :
And all about the courtly stable.
Bright-harness'd Angels sit in order serviceable.

Typhon, The murderer of Osiris, defeated in battle by Isis.
Bright-harness'd, In bright armour.

25

AN EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE DRAMATIC POET W. SHAKESPEAR

WHAT needs my Shakespear for his honour'd
bones,

The labour of an age in piled stones,
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid ?

Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy
name ?

Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving ;
And so sepulcher'd in such pomp dost lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

Star-ypointing, Pointing to the stars. Y- should only be used
with a *past* participle ; here Milton uses it erroneously with a
present participle.

AT A SOLEMN MUSIC

Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heav'n's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ
Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce ;
And to our high-rais'd phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure content,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne
To him that sits thereon
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,
Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
Their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow,
And the cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly ;
That we on Earth with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise ;
As once we did, till disproportion'd sin
Jarr'd against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion
sway'd
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long
To his celestial consort us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of
light.

Diapason, In organ music, the concord of the octave.
Consort, Band.

SONG

On May morning

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flow'ry May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip, and the pale primrose.

Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth and youth, and warm desire,
Woods and groves, are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale, doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

Harbinger, Forerunner.

SONG

From Arcades

O'ER the smooth enamell'd green,
Where no print of step hath been.
Follow me as I sing,
And touch the warbled string.
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm star-proof.
Follow me,
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendour as befits
Her deity.
Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

Arcades was a mask (see *Comus*) performed at Harefield Hall, Middlesex.

ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER

who sickened in the time of his vacancy, being forbid to go to London, by reason of the Plague.

HERE lies old Hobson ; Death hath broke his girt,

And here alas, hath laid him in the dirt ;
Or else the ways being foul, twenty to one,
He's here stuck in a slough, and overthrown.
'Twas such a shifter, that if truth were known,
Death was half glad when he had got him down ;
For he had any time this ten years full,
Dodg'd with him, betwixt Cambridge and the Bull.

And surely Death could never have prevail'd,
Had not his weekly course of carriage fail'd ;
But lately finding him so long at home,
And thinking now his journey's end was come,
And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,
In the kind office of a chamberlin
Show'd him his room where he must lodge that night,

Pull'd off his boots, and took away the light :
If any ask for him, it shall be said,
Hobson has supp'd, and 's newly gone to bed.

Hobson, Carrier between Cambridge and the Bull Inn, Bishops-gate, London, as well as farmer, innkeeper, and maltster. He also hired out horses, and he always made his customer take the horse which stood nearest to the stable door : hence the phrase *Hobson's choice*.

PSALM CXXXVI

LET us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind :
 For his mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze his name abroad,
For of gods he is the God ;
 For his, etc.

O let us his praises tell,
Who doth the wrathful tyrants quell.
 For his, etc.

That with his miracles doth make
Amazed Heav'n and Earth to shake :
 For his, etc.

That by his wisdom did create
The painted Heav'ns so full of state.
 For his, etc.

That did the solid Earth ordain
To rise above the watry plain.
 For his, etc.

That by his all-commanding might
Did fill the new-made world with light.
 For his, etc.

Psalm cxxxvi. Milton transposed many of the Psalms into metrical verse. These stanzas are selected from the best known of these not very successful attempts at versification.

A Shorter Milton

And caus'd the golden-tressed sun,
All the day long his course to run.
For his, etc.

The horned moon to shine by night
Amongst her spangled sisters bright.
For his, etc.

All living creatures he doth feed,
And with full hand supplies their need.
For his, etc.

Let us therefore warble forth
His mighty majesty and worth.
For his, etc.

That his mansion hath on high
Above the reach of mortal eye :
For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus, and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights
unholy,
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous
wings,
And the night-raven sings ;
There under ebon shades, and low-brow'd
rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come thou Goddess fair and free,
In Heav'n yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore ;
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a Maying,

Cerberus, The three-headed dog who guarded the entrance to the Underworld.

Stygian, Infernal ; the Styx was one of the rivers of Hades.

Cimmerian. The Cimmerians were a fabulous people, who lived in perpetual darkness. *Yclept*, Called.

Euphrosyne, One of the Three Graces ; she presided over festivities.

Venus, Goddess of beauty.

Bacchus, God of wine.

Zephyr, The gentle west wind.

Aurora, The dawn.

A Shorter Milton

There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washt in dew,
Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods, and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek ;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty ;
And if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free ;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;
Then to come in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine.
While the cock with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn door,
Stoutly struts his dames before,
Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn

Hebe, Goddess of youth.

L'Allegro

Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill.
Some time walking not unseen
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Rob'd in flames, and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight.
While the ploughman near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the landscape round it measures ;
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray,
Mountains on whose barren breast
The lab'ring clouds do often rest :
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.
Towers, and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some Beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage-chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
Are at their savoury dinner set

Cynosure, The Dog's Tail, or, as we call it, the Little Bear, by which the Phoenician sailors steered their course.

Corydon, *Thyrsis*, *Phillis*, and *Thestylis*, Classical names of shepherds and shepherdesses.

A Shorter Milton

Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses ;
And then in haste the bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves ;
Or if the earlier season lead
To the tann'd haycock in the mead,
Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth, and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade ;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the live-long daylight fail ;
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many afeat,
How fairy Mab the junkets eat ;
She was pinch'd, and pull'd she said,
And he by Friar's lanthorn led
Tells how the drudging Goblin sweat,
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end.
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength.
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lull'd asleep.
Tow'red cities please us then,

Rebeck, Old-time fiddle, with four strings.

Friar, Friar Rush, a mythical figure who haunted houses.

L'Allegro

And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique pageantry,
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespear, fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony ;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heap'd Elysian flow'rs, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear

Hymen, God of marriage.

Jonson, The poet and playwright, Ben Jonson.

Lydian. Lydia was a country in Asia Minor. The ancients called the 'Lydian mode,' the scale of F with B natural instead of B flat ; it was used for tender airs.

A Shorter Milton

Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half regain'd Eurydice,
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth with thee, I mean to live.

Pluto, God of the Underworld, took Eurydice from her husband Orpheus, the mythical musician. Orpheus went down to the Underworld and so charmed Pluto with his music that he agreed to allow Eurydice to return to Earth, on condition that Orpheus did not look at her on the way. Before they reached the Earth, Orpheus looked round and Eurydice vanished.

IL PENSERO

HENCE, vain deluding joys,
The brood of folly without father bred,
How little you bestead,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys ;
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or liklest hovering dreams
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But hail thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail divinest Melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight ;
And therefore to our weaker view,
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue ;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea Nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended ;
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta, long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore ;
His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,
Such mixture was not held a stain).

Bestead, Help.

Morpheus, Son of Sleep and god of dreams.

Memnon, King of the Ethiopians, who went to help the Trojans, but was slain by Achilles. His sister was named Hemera.

Ethiop queen, Cassiopea, mother of Andromeda, whom she exposed to a sea monster to appease the Sea nymphs. Mother and daughter were placed among the stars.

Vesta, Goddess of the hearth, daughter of Saturn and Rhea.

A Shorter Milton

Oft in glimmering bow'rs, and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
While yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cyprus lawn,
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With ev'n step, and musing gait,
And looks commerçing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes :
There held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast,
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring,
Aye round about Jove's altar sing.
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure ;
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The Cherub Contemplation,
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,

Ida, A mountain in Crete, where Jupiter (Jove) was brought up.
Stole, Veil, hood.
Decent, Comely, beautiful.

Cyprus, A fine linen.

Philomel, The nightingale.

Il Pensero

While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
Gently o'er th'accustom'd oak ;
Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy !
Thee chauntress oft the woods among,
I woo to hear thy even-song ;
And missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wand'ring Moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the Heav'n's wide pathless way :
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar ;
Or if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm :
Or let my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere

Cynthia, Diana, goddess of the moon. *Removed, Remote.*

Out-watch the Bear. The constellation of the Great Bear never sets, so that it could only be out-watched by waiting for dawn.

Thrice-great Hermes, A fabled king of Egypt, famous for his learning.

Unsphere, Bring down from his high station.

A Shorter Milton

The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook :
And of those Demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element.

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptr'd pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine.

Or what (though rare) of later age,
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower,

Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
. Such notes as warbled to the string,

. Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek.
Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass,

Pall, The mantle worn by Roman actors in tragedy.

Thebes, City of Greece, the scene of several of the most famous Greek tragic plays, including the *Seven against Thebes* of Æschylus.

Pelops' line. Agamemnon was descended from Pelops and was the subject of one of the greatest of Greek tragedies by Æschylus.
Of later age, An allusion to Shakespeare.

Buskin'd. Greek tragic actors wore heavy boots, or buskins.

Musæus, A mythical Greek poet, said by some legends to be the son of Orpheus.

Pluto. See note on page 38.

Cambuscan bold. This refers to Chaucer's 'Squire's Tale.'

Il Pensero

On which the Tartar king did ride ;
And if aught else, great bards beside,
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of tourneys and of trophies hung ;
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus Night oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not trick'd and frounc'd as she was wont,
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kerchef'd in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or usher'd with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute drops from off the eaves.
And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me Goddess bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flow'ry work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring
With such consort as they keep,

And if aught else. . . . This and the following lines refer to the works of Edmund Spenser.

Trick'd, Adorned.

Frounc'd, With her hair decked.

The Attic boy, Cephalus, beloved by Eos, the dawn.

Still, Gentle.

Day's garish eye, The sun.

A Shorter Milton

Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep ;
And let some strange mysterious dream,
Wave at his wings in airy stream,
Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eyelids laid.
And as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or th'unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail,
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antic pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full voic'd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that Heav'n doth show,
And every herb that sips the dew ;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures Melancholy give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

Pale, Enclosure.

Massy proof, Able to bear the weight placed upon them.

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas, 1637. And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due :
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer :
Who would not sing for Lycidas ? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme
He must not float upon his wat'ry bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destin'd urn,
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.

A learned friend. This was Edward King, son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland under Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I. On his voyage to Ireland his ship struck on a rock on the English coast, and he perished in the sea. He was distinguished for his piety and talents, was a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and was contemporary with Milton at the University.

Sere, Dry, withered. *Sisters of the sacred well,* The Muses.

A Shorter Milton

For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill.

Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose, at ev'ning, bright
Toward Heav'n's descent had slop'd his westering
wheel.

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to th'oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with clov'n heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Damoetas lov'd to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return !
Thee Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn.

The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen,
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe
wear,
When first the white-thorn blows ;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

The self-same hill. Both Milton and King were educated at Cambridge. *Fed the same flock,* Studied together.

Sultry horn, The hum of the gray-fly in the noonday heat.

Batt'ning, Feeding. *Satyrs and Fauns,* Woodland deities.

Damoetas, A reference to some tutor at Cambridge; *Damoetas* was actually a shepherd mentioned by Virgil.

Gadding, Creeping, straying. *Canker,* The canker-worm.

Lycidas

Where were ye Nymphs when the remorseless
deep

Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas ?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream :
Ay me, I fondly dream !

Had ye been there—for what could that have
done ?

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?

Alas ! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?
Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,

Mona, The isle of Anglesey, the centre of the Druids or priests of Ancient Britain. Possibly *the steep* is Penmaenmawr, the headland of the coast opposite Anglesey. *Deva* is the river Dee.

The Muse herself. Calliope, chief of the nine Muses, was the mother of Orpheus.

Rout. Orpheus, in his grief for the loss of Euridice, treated all the women of his native Thrace with contempt ; they in revenge, during the Bacchanalian orgies, tore him to pieces and threw his head into the river Hebrus.

Amaryllis, The name of a shepherdess in Virgil's works ; *Neæra*, a girl's name in Horace's poems.

Clear, Noble.

Guerdon, Reward.

A Shorter Milton

And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,
And slits the thin spun life. ' But not the
praise,'

Phœbus repli'd, and touch'd my trembling ears ;
' Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to th'world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed.'

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
Smooth - sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal
reeds,

That strain I heard was of higher mood :
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea ;
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain ?
And question'd every gust of rugged winds
That blows from off each beaked promontory :
They knew not of his story,
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd.
The air was calm, and on the level brine

Fury. Milton thus speaks of Atropos, one of the three Fates. She cut the thread of life which was spun by one of her sisters.

Phœbus, Apollo, the sun god.

Arethuse was a fountain in the island of Ortygia, near Syracuse. The reference here is to the Sicilian poet Theocritus.

Mincius, A river near the birthplace of Virgil, a village near Mantua.

In Neptune's plea, To hold inquiry for Neptune, god of the sea.

Hippotades, Eolus, son of Hippotes, who ruled the winds, which he kept shut up in a cavern.

Lycidas

Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark
Built in th'eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flow'r inscrib'd with woe.
' Ah ; who hath reft ' (quoth he) ' my dearest
pledge ? '

Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake,
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain,
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain)
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake,
' How well could I have spar'd for thee, young
swain,
A now of such as for their bellies' sake,
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold ?
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how
to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs !

Panope with all her sisters, The Nereids, the fifty daughters of Nereus and Doris, the sea-nymphs of the Mediterranean.

Camus, The river Cam, on which Cambridge is situated.

Sanguine flow'r, The hyacinth, which was supposed to have sprung from the blood of Hyacinthus, a Spartan youth accidentally killed by Apollo. On its petals were said to be inscribed the letters ' AI AI,' a Greek cry of woe, hence ' inscrib'd with woe.'

Pilot of the Galilean lake, St Peter, who had the keys of heaven and hell ; he was ' mitr'd ' because he was Bishop of Rome.

Spar'd for thee. St. Peter would rather have seen some of the less zealous clergy perish than Edward King. The clergy are here likened to shepherds, their congregations to sheep.

A Shorter Milton

What recks it them ? What need they ? They
are sped ;

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scannel pipes of wretched straw ;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they
draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread :
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said,
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.'

Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
That shrunk thy streams ; return Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flowrets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low where the mild whispers use,
Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freakt with jet,
The glowing violet,

Are sped, Are provided for.

Scannel, Meagre, thin.

Grim wolf, The Roman Church ; possibly also a learned reference to the wolf which nursed Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome.

Two-handed engine, Perhaps the weapon of Christ's anger, two-handed because it requires both hands to wield it. Many explanations of this passage have been given.

Alpheus, A river of the Peloponnese in Greece, which disappears underground and was supposed to reappear in Sicily mingled with the waters of the spring Arethusa.

Swart-star, Either the star that makes plants black by its heat, or simply the injurious star.

Rathe, Early.

Lycidas

The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears :
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me ! Whilst thee the shores, and sounding
seas

Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
Or whether thou to our moist vows deny'd,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold ;
Look homeward Angel now, and melt with ruth ;
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woful Shepherds weep no more,
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled
ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of him that walk'd the
waves,

Monstrous world, World of monsters.

Bellerus, A name coined by Milton.

Mount, St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall, on which Milton imagines the archangel actually seated, looking towards Namancos and Bayona in north-western Spain.

A Shorter Milton

Where other groves, and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now Lycidas the shepherds weep no more ;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to th'oaks and
rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray,
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay :
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay ;
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

Stops, The holes of a flute.

Doric lay. Theocritus and Moschus, two Dorian Greek poets of Syracuse, wrote of the deaths of Daphnis and Bion ; and Milton had this in mind in writing *Lycidas*.

SONNETS

I

On his being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three

How soon hath Time the subtle thief of youth,
Stol'n on his wing my three and twent'i'th year !
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure ev'n,
To that same lot, however mean, or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of
Heav'n ;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great task Master's eye.

2

When the Assault was Intended to the City

CAPTAIN or Colonel, or Knight in arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may
seize,
If ever deed of honour did thee please,

Assault. After the battle of Edge Hill, 1642, the Royalist troops advanced as far as Brentford; but Parliamentarian reinforcements prevented them from advancing farther. It has been suggested that if London had really been in danger of capture by the enemy, Milton would have taken more practical steps for his safety than writing this sonnet.

A Shorter Milton

Guard them, and him within protect from
harms,
He can requite thee, for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower,
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground : and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save th'Athenian walls from ruin bare.

3

On the Detraction which followed upon my writing certain Treatises

A BOOK was writ of late call'd Tetrachordon ;
And wov'n close, both matter, form and style ;
The subject new : it walk'd the town a while,
Numb'ring good intellects ; now seldom por'd
on.
Cries the stall-reader, ' Bless us ! what a word on
A title-page is this ! ' and some in file
Stand spelling false, while one might walk to
Mile-
End green. Why is it harder Sirs, than
Gordon,

Emathian conqueror, Alexander the Great. Emathia was another name for Macedon. When he took and destroyed Thebes, he left standing the house of the poet Pindar.

Sad Electra's poet, Euripides. When Athens was conquered, verses from the *Electra* of Euripides recited by a minstrel so wrought upon the conquerors that they spared the city from destruction.

Tetrachordon, One of Milton's tracts on divorce.

Sonnets

Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp ?

Those rugged names to our like mouths grow
sleek

That would have made Quintilian stare and
gasp.

Thy age, like ours, O Soul of Sir John Cheke,
Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,
When thou taught'st Cambridge, and king
Edward Greek.

4

To the Lord General Fairfax at the Siege of Colchester

FAIRFAX, whose name in arms through Europe
rings

Filling each mouth with envy, or with praise,
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,
And rumours loud, that daunt remotest kings,

Thy firm unshak'n virtue ever brings

Victory home, though new rebellions raise
Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays
Her brok'n league, to imp their serpent wings.

O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand ;

For what can war, but endless war still breed ?
Till truth, and right from violence be freed,

Colkitto, etc. Scottish names, which Milton uses to ridicule writers of theological subjects.

Quintilian, A Roman writer on rhetoric, who lived in the first century, A.D. *Sir John Cheke*, Tutor of King Edward VI.

Hydra, a fabulous water-serpent killed by Hercules. It had seven heads, and as fast as one was cut off two sprang up in its place.

False North. The Scots invaded England in 1648, in support of the King, but were defeated by Cromwell in a three days' battle between Preston and Warrington, referred to as 'Darwen stream' in the next sonnet. *Imp*, To cure the broken wing (of a hawk).

A Shorter Milton

And public faith clear'd from the shameful brand
Of public fraud. In vain doth valour bleed,
While avarice, and rapine share the land.

5

To the Lord General Cromwell

CROMWELL, our chief of men, who through a
cloud

Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast
plough'd,

And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
Hast rear'd God's trophies, and his work
pursu'd,

While Darwen stream with blood of Scots
imbru'd,

And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,

And Worcester's laureat wreath; yet much
remains

To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renown'd than war: new foes arise,

Threat'ning to bind our souls with secular chains:
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw.

6

To Sir Henry Vane the Younger

VANE, young in years, but in sage counsel old,
Than whom a better senator ne'er held

Sonnets

The helm of Rome, when gowns not arms
repell'd
The fierce Epirot and the African bold,
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
The drift of hollow states, hard to be spell'd,
Then to advise how war may best, upheld,
Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold
In all her equipage; besides to know
Both spiritual power and civil, what each
means,
What severs each, thou hast learn'd, which
few have done.
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe :
Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans
In peace, and reck'ns thee her eldest son.

7

On the Late Massacre in Piedmont

AVENGE O Lord thy slaughter'd saints, whose
bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold ;
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and
stones,
Forget not : in thy book record their groans

Fierce Epirot, Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, who invaded Italy and defeated the Romans.

African bold, Hannibal, the Carthaginian, who spent almost his whole life in war against the Romans.

Slaughter'd saints. The Duke of Savoy gave to his Protestant subjects in the Vaudois the alternative of attending Mass or leaving the country. His troops enforced the edict with fire and sword. All England was indignant, and a large sum was collected for the sufferers. Cromwell successfully protested to the Duke and to Louis XIV. of France.

A Shorter Milton

Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their
moans

The vales redoubl'd to the hills, and they
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes
sow

O'er all th'Italian fields where still doth sway
The triple tyrant ; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learn'd thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

8

On his Blindness

WHEN I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more
bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide ;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd ? '

I fondly ask ; but patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, ' God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts ; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best ; his
state

Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest :
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

Babylonian woe. The Puritans commonly referred to Rome as Babylon, and to the Pope as the Babylonian high-priest.

One talent. See St. Matthew xxv. 14-30.

Sonnets

9

To Mr. Lawrence

LAWRENCE of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the
fire
Help waste a sullen day ; what may be won
From the hard season gaining ? time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth ; and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sow'd nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touch'd, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air ?
He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

10

To Cyriac Skinner

CYRIAC, whose grandsire on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause
Pronounc'd and in his volumes taught our
laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench :

Lawrence was the son of Henry Lawrence, president of Cromwell's Council and Member for Herefordshire in the Little Parliament, 1653.

Favonius, The name of the west wind, the wind of springtime.

Cyriac Skinner's mother was daughter of Sir Edward Coke, Chief Justice of England.

Themis, The goddess of justice.

A Shorter Milton

To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth, that after no repenting draws ;
Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intend, and what the
French.

To measure life, learn thou betimes, and know
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way ;
For other things mild Heav'n a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

II

On his Deceased Wife

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband
gave,
Rescu'd from death by force though pale and
faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed
taint,

Euclid, The celebrated mathematician of Alexandria, who lived
323-283 B.C.

Archimedes, The greatest of all the mathematicians of the ancient
world, who was born at Syracuse in 287 B.C.

Swede, Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, who invaded Germany
to help the Protestants in the Thirty Years' War, about the time
when this sonnet was written.

Alcestis was the wife of Admetus, king of Pheræ, in Thessaly.
She offered to die in place of her husband, since the god Apollo had
prevailed on the Fates to allow Admetus to live if another would die
in his place. When Death came to fetch Alcestis, Hercules (*Jove's
great son*) wrestled with him, overthrew him, and brought Alcestis
back to her husband.

Sonnets

Purification in the old law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind :
Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O as to embrace me she inclin'd
I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my
night.

12

On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament

BECAUSE you have thrown off your prelate lord,
And with stiff vows renounc'd his liturgy
To seize the widow'd whore Plurality
From them whose sin ye envi'd, not abhor'r'd,
Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword
To force our consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic hierarchy
Taught ye by mere A. S. and Rutherford ?
Men whose life, learning, faith and pure intent
Would have been held in high esteem with
Paul

Prelate lord, The Archbishop.

Plurality, The holding of more than one church living. This was a common Puritan complaint against the Anglican clergy ; but Milton here brings the same charge against the Presbyterians.

Classic hierarchy. Under the Presbyterian system the country was divided into provinces, which were divided into classes, and these in turn were divided into parishes.

A. S., Adam Stewart, writer of a tract against the Independents, the sect to which Cromwell belonged.

Rutherford wrote a treatise ' Against pretended liberty of conscience.'

A Shorter Milton

Must now be nam'd and printed heretics
By shallow Edwards and Scotch what d'ye call :
But we do hope to find out all your tricks,
Your plots and packing worse than those of
Trent,

That so the Parliament
May, with their wholesome and preventive shears
Clip your phylacteries, though bauk your ears,
And succour our just fears
When they shall read this clearly in your charge,
New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large.

Edwards was the author of ‘Reason against Independence and Toleration.’

Trent. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) was a council of the Roman Church, which promulgated a number of reforms.

Phylacteries were slips of parchment, with passages from the Law written on them, worn by the Pharisees on their foreheads.

Bauk, Stop short at.

Writ large. Both ‘presbyter’ and ‘priest’ are derived from the Greek word ‘presbyteros,’ meaning ‘elder,’ so that the former is only a less contracted form of the latter.

COMUS, A MASK

Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634

The Persons

The Attendant Spirit, afterwards in the habit of
Thyrsis.

Comus with his crew.

The Lady.

First Brother.

Second Brother.

Sabrina the Nymph.

The chief persons which presented, were

The Lord Brackley.

Mr. Thomas Egerton his brother.

The Lady Alice Egerton.

The First Scene discovers a wild wood.

• *The Attendant Spirit descends or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live inspher'd
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted
care
Confin'd, and pester'd in this pinfold here,

Pester'd, Crowded, confined.

Pinfold, A fold for strayed cattle.

A Shorter Milton

Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives
After this mortal change, to her true servants
Amongst the enthron'd Gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity :
To such my errand is, and but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds,
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune besides the sway
Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove,
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That like to rich and various gems inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep ;
Which he to grace his tributary Gods
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire
crowns,
And wield their little tridents ; but this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities ;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation proud in arms :
Where his fair offspring nurs'd in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted sceptre ; but their way

Change, A figure in a dance.

Ambrosial, Heavenly ; ambrosia was the food of the gods.

High and nether Jove. The three sons of Saturn shared the rule
of the universe between them : Jupiter (' high Jove ') took heaven
and the upper world, Pluto (' nether Jove ') the underworld, and
Neptune the sea.

Mickle, Great.

A Mask

Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring passenger.
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sovereign Jove

I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard ;
And listen why, for I will tell ye now
What never yet was heard in tale or song
From old or modern bard, in hall or bow'r.

Bacchus that first from out the purple grape,
Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell (who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the sun ? whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine).
This Nymph that gaz'd upon his clust'ring locks,
With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up and Comus
nam'd.

Who ripe, and frolic of his full grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And in thick shelter of black shades imbower'd,

Bacchus was the wine god, son of Jupiter and Semele. He taught men the cultivation of the vine to make wine. There is a story that he was carried off by mariners, who were turned into dolphins.

Circe, Daughter of Helios, the sun, was famous for her magical arts. She lived on the island of *Aæa*, where Ulysses was cast during his voyage home from Troy.

Celtic and Iberian fields, France and Spain.

A Shorter Milton

Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Off'ring to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus, which as they
taste
(For most do taste through fond intemperate
thirst)
Soon as the potion works, their human
count'nance,
Th'express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were ;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore when any favour'd of high Jove,
Chances to pass through this advent'rous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star,
I shoot from Heav'n, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do : but first I must put off
These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain,
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods, nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch,
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps, I must be viewless now.

Ounce, Leopard.

Advent'rous, Full of adventures.
Viewless, Invisible.

A Mask

Comus enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other ; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering ; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.

Com. The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of Heav'n doth hold ;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream ;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile welcome Joy, and Feast,
Midnight Shout and Revelry,
Tipsy Dance and Jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws in slumber lie.
We that are of purer fire
Imitate the starry quire,
Who in their nightly watchful spheres
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move ;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves ;

Sleep. The deep, the high sea.

Starry quire, Refers to the music of the spheres. See note on page 20.

Pert, Sprightly, lively.

A Shorter Milton

By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep :
What hath night to do with sleep ?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wak'ns Love.
Come let us our rites begin,
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail Goddess of nocturnal sport
Dark-veil'd Cotytto, t'whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns ; mysterious dame
That ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air,
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn on th'Indian steep
From her cabin'd loophole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace,
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.

Cotytto, A Thracian goddess, whose festival was held at night, and included all kinds of licentious rites.

Stygian, Belonging to the Underworld.

Hecate, Goddess of enchantments.

Spets, Spits.

Round, A dance.

A Mask

Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees,

Our number may affright : some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains ; I shall ere long
Be well-stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsels to suspicious flight,
Which must not be, for that's against my course ;
I under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy
Baited with reasons not unpleasing,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes, I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here

The Lady enters.

Lad. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now ; methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,
When for their teeming flocks, and granges ful,

Shrouds, Hiding-places.

Glozing, Deceitful, flattering.

Gear, Business.

A Shorter Milton

In wanton dance, they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath
To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence
Of such late wassailers ; yet, O where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangl'd wood ?
My brothers when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepp'd, as they said, to the next thicket side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Ev'n
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts ; 'tis likeliest
They had engag'd their wand'ring steps too far,
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me ; else O thievish Night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,
That nature hung in Heav'n, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller ?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence ev'n now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my list'ning ear,
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be ? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,

Wassailers, Revellers.

Votarist, One who had vowed to be a pilgrim.

Palmer's weed, Pilgrim's dress.

Phœbus' wain, The chariot of Phœbus Apollo, the sun god.

Single darkness, Darkness alone.

A Mask

Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong-siding champion Conscience.—
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering Angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity,
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme good, t' whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glist'ring guardian if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night ?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
I cannot halloo to my Brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture, for my new enliven'd spirits
Prompt me ; and they perhaps are not far off.

Song

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph that liv'st un-
seen
Within thy airy shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well :

Meander, A river, proverbial for its winding course, which flows into the Ægean Sea near Miletus.

A Shorter Milton

Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likkest thy Narcissus are ?
 O if thou have
 Hid them in some flow'ry cave,
 Tell me but where
 Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere,
 So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heav'n's har-
monies.

Enter Comus.

Com. Can any mortal mixture of earth's
mould

Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment ?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidd'n residence ;
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smil'd : I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtl'd Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs, and baleful drugs,
Who as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium ; Scylla wept,

Daughter of the sphere. Echo is here supposed to have its origin from the reverberation of the music of the spheres (see note on page 20).

Sirens. Three sea-nymphs who lived on an island off south-west Italy ; by their singing they enticed mariners to their destruction on dangerous rocks.

Kirtl'd. A kirtle was a woman's garment.

Naiades. Water nymphs.

Elysium. The abode of the blessed in the Underworld.

Scylla and *Charybdis*, Two monsters, who lived opposite one another on rocks between Italy and Sicily. Mariners who tried to escape the one fell into the clutches of the other.

A Mask

And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause :
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself ;
But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail foreign wonder,
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Silvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lad. Nay gentle Shepherd, ill is lost that
praise

That is address'd to unattending ears,
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Com. What chance good Lady, hath bereft you
thus ?

Lad. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Com. Could that divide you from near-ushering
guides ?

Lad. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Com. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why ?

Lad. To seek i' th' valley some cool friendly
spring.

Com. And left your fair side all unguarded
Lady ?

Lad. They were but twain, and purpos'd quick
return.

Com. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lad. How easy my misfortune is to hit !

A Shorter Milton

Com. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

Lad. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Com. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

Lad. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

Com. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox

In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swink'd hedger at his supper sate;
I saw them under a green mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots,
Their port was more than human, as they stood;
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element
That in the colours of the rainbow live
And play i' th' plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And as I pass'd, I worshipp'd; if those you seek
It were a journey like the path to Heav'n,
To help you find them.

Lad. Gentle Villager.
What readiest way would bring me to that place?

Com. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lad. To find that out, good Shepherd, I suppose,

In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practis'd feet.

Com. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,

Hebe, Goddess of youth, cupbearer of the gods.

Swink'd, Weary with toil.

Port, Bearing, appearance.

Element, Sky.

Plighted, Folded.

A Mask

And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood :
And if your stray-attendants be yet lodg'd
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch'd pallet rouse ; if otherwise
I can conduct you Lady to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

Lad. Shepherd I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended : in a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion'd strength. Shepherd lead
on—

Enter the two Brothers.

Eld. Bro. Unmuffle ye faint stars, and thou
fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benizon,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades ;
Or if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper
Though a rush candle, from the wicker-hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long-levell'd rule of streaming light,

Bosky, Shaded by bushes.

Disinherit, Dispossess

A Shorter Milton

And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

2 Bro.

Or if our eyes

Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks, penn'd in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering
In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.
But O that hapless virgin our lost sister,
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and
thistles ?

Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement, and affright,
Or while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat ?

Eld. Bro. Peace Brother, be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils ;
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid ?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion ?
My sister is not so defenceless left,
As you imagine ; she has a hidden strength
Which you remember not.

Star of Arcady. Callisto, daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia (Arcady), was changed by Jupiter into the constellation of the Great Bear, her son Arcas into the Lesser Bear (also called Cynosura or the Dog's Tail).

Tyrian, Because mariners from Tyre steered by it.
Exquisite, Curious, inquisitive.

A Mask

2 Bro. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heav'n, if you mean
that?

Eld. Bro. I mean that too, but yet a hidden
strength,
Which if Heav'n gave it, may be term'd her
own:

'Tis chastity, my Brother, chastity:
She that has that, is clad in complete steel,
And like a quiver'd Nymph with arrows keen
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,
Where through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea there, where very desolation dwells
By grots, and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart faëry of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men

Trace, Track.

Unharbour'd, Unsheltered.
Unblench'd, Unflinching.

A Shorter Milton

Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o' th' woods.

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone,

But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dash'd brute violence
With sudden adoration, and blank awe.

So dear to Heav'n is saintly chastity,
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lacky her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream, and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear ;
Till oft converse with heav'ly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal : but when lust
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,

Gorgon shield. The Gorgons were monsters who turned all they looked upon to stone. Only one, Medusa, was mortal, and she was killed by Perseus. The goddess Minerva wore Medusa's head on her breastplate, and there is a story that Cupid was afraid of it. He is also said to have been unable to pursue Diana the huntress, goddess of the moon, so swift was she in the chase.

A Mask

And link'd itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

2 Bro. How charming is divine philosophy !
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

Eld. Bro. List, list, I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

2 Bro. Methought so too ; what should it be ?
Eld. Bro. For certain

Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

2 Bro. Heav'n keep my Sister ; again, again,
and near ;
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

Eld. Bro. I'll halloo ;
If he be friendly, he comes well ; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

Enter the attendant Spirit, habited like a shepherd.
That halloo I should know, what are you ?
speak ;

Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else.

Spir. What voice is that, my young Lord ?
speak again.

2 Bro. O Brother, 'tis my father's shepherd,
sure.

Eld Bro. Thyrsis ? Whose artful strains have
oft delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale.

Night-founder'd, Benighted.

A Shorter Milton

How cam'st thou here, good swain ? hath any
ram

Slip't from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook ?

How could'st thou find this dark sequester'd
nook ?

Spir. O my lov'd master's heir, and his next
joy,

I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf ; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But O my virgin Lady, where is she ?
How chance she is not in your company ?

Eld. Bro. To tell thee sadly Shepherd, without
blame,
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

Spir. Aye me unhappy, then my fears are true.

Eld. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis ? Prithee
briefly shew.

Spir. I'll tell ye ; 'tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance,)
What the sage poets taught by th'heav'nly Muse,
Storied of old, in high immortal verse
Of dire chimeras and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell ;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypress shades a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries,
And here to every thirsty wanderer,

A Mask

By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixt, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Character'd in the face ; this have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' th' hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom glade, whence night by
night

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabl'd wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite th' unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honey-suckle, and began
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill, but ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance ;
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy frightened steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,

Dew-besprent, Besprinkled with dew.

A Shorter Milton

And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death ; but O ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd Lady, your dear sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear,
And ' O poor hapless nightingale,' thought I,
' How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly
snare ! '

Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste
Through paths, and turnings oft'n trod by day,
Till guided by mine ear I found the place
Where that damn'd wizard hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady his wish'd prey,
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager ;
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant ; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here,
But further know I not.

2 Bro. O night and shades,
How are ye join'd with Hell in triple knot
Against th'unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless ! Is this the confidence
You gave me, Brother ?

Eld. Bro. Yes, and keep it still ;
Lean on it safely, not a period
Shall be unsaid for me : against the threats

Harrow, Conquer, subdue.

A Mask

Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm,
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd ;
Yea even that which mischief meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last
Gather'd like scum, and settl'd to itself
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed, and self-consum'd ; if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come,
 let's on.

Against th' opposing will and arm of Heav'n
May never this just sword be lifted up,
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Curs'd as his life.

Spir. Alas good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise,
But here thy sword can do thee little stead ;
Far other arms, and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms ;
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

Enthrall'd, Enslaved.

Acheron, The Underworld.

Harpies, Three monsters, half birds, half women, who carried off
people who had disappeared.

Hydras. See note on page 55.

Purchase, What is stolen.

A Shorter Milton

Eld. Bro. Why prithee, Shepherd,
How dost thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation ?

Spir. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to th'morning ray ;
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leatherne scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties ;
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out ;
Thè leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flow'r, but not in this soil :
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon,
And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave ;
He call'd it hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew, blast, or damp
Or ghastly furies' apparition.
I purs'd it up, but little reck'ning made,
Till now that this extremity compell'd.
But now I find it true ; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter though disguis'd,

To see to. To behold.

Moly. The plant which Hermes gave Ulysses to escape the enchantments of Circe.

Clouted. Patched.

A Mask

Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off : if you have this about you,
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall ;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandish'd blade rush on him, break his
glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground.
But seize his wand, though he and his curs'd
crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis lead on apace, I'll follow
thee,
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness ; soft music, tables spread with all dainties. Comus appears with his rabble, and the Lady set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.

Com. Nay Lady, sit ; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,
And you a statue ; or as Daphne was
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lad. Fool do not boast,
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacl'd, while Heav'n sees good.

Vulcan, God of fire.

Daphne, Daughter of the river-god Peneus. Apollo, attracted by her beauty, pursued ; but just as he was overtaking her she was changed into a laurel tree, in answer to her prayers for aid.

A Shorter Milton

Com. Why are you vexed Lady? why do you frown?

Here dwell no frowns, nor anger, from these gates
Sorrow flies far: See here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.

And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames, and dances in his crystal bounds
With spirits of balm, and fragrant syrups mixed.
Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone,
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.

Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent
For gentle usage, and soft delicacy?

But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,
And harshly deal like an ill borrower
With that which you receiv'd on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but fair Virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lad. 'Twill not false traitor,
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with
lies.

Was this the cottage, and the safe abode
Thou toldst me of? What grim aspects are
these,

Nepenthes, The drug which Helen gave to her husband Menelaus.

A Mask

These ugly-headed monsters ? Mercy guard me !
Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul
deceiver,

Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood and base forgery,
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With lickerish baits fit to ensnare a brute ?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer ; none
But such as are good men can give good things,
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.

Com. O foolishness of men ! that lend their
ears

To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth,
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please, and sate the curious taste ?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-
hair'd silk

To deck her sons, and that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch'd th' all-worshipp'd ore, and precious
gems

To store her children with ; if all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,

Lickerish, Attractive to the taste.

Budge, Surly.

Tub. Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher of Athens, took up
residence in a tub, to show his contempt of wealth and comfort.

Hutch'd, Shut in.

A Shorter Milton

Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
Th'all-giver would be unthank'd, would be un-
prais'd,
Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd ;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth ;
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own
weight,
And strangl'd with her waste fertility ;
Th'earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with
plumes,
The herds would over-magnitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and th'unsought
diamonds
Would so embrase the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List Lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted name Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current, and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partak'n bliss,
Unsavoury in th'enjoyment of itself ;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities
Where most may wonder at the workmanship ;
It is for homely features to keep home,
They had their name thence ; coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply

A Mask

The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn ?
There was another meaning in these gifts,
Think what, and be advis'd, you are but young
yet.

Lad. I had not thought to have unlock'd my
lips

In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine
eyes,

Obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride :
Imposter do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance ; she good cateress
Means her provision only to the good
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare temperance :
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispense'd
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumber'd with her store ;
And then the giver would be better thank'd,
His praise due paid ; for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on ?
Or have I said enough ? To him that dares

A Shorter Milton

Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what end ?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mystery,
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity ;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldest not
know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling
fence,
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd ;
Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and
shake,
Till all thy magic structures rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

Com. She fables not, I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior power ;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shudd'rning
dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more ;

Fence, The art of defence.

Erebus was the god of darkness, but his name was used to denote the Underworld.

Saturn's crew. The Titans, whom Jupiter overthrew and imprisoned below Tartarus, contended the sovranity of heaven with *Saturn*, father of Jupiter.

A Mask

This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation ;
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees
And settling of a melancholy blood ;
But this will cure all straight, one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

*The Brothers rush in with swords drawn, wrest
his glass out of his hand, and break it against the
ground ; his rout make sign of resistance, but are
all driven in. The attendant Spirit comes in.*

Spir. What, have you let the false enchanter
'scape ?

O ye mistook, ye should have snatch'd his wand,
And bound him fast ; without his rod revers'd,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless.
Yet stay, be not disturb'd, now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be us'd,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains.

There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn

stream,

Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure,
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
The guiltless damsel flying the mad pursuit

Melibœus was the name of a shepherd in Virgil's poems.

Soothest, Truest.

Brute, the Trojan, was a mythical hero, who escaped after the fall of Troy and became king of Britain.

A Shorter Milton

Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That stay'd her flight with his cross-flowing
course.

The water nymphs that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearly wrists and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall,
Who piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers strew'd with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils till she reviv'd,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river ; still she retains
Her maid'n gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals.
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invok'd in warbled song ;
For maid'nhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself
In hard bescetting need ; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Nereus, Son of Oceanus, father of the Nereids (see note on page 49).

Asphodel, A plant which grew in Elysium, the abode of the blessed in the Underworld.

A Mask

Song

Sabrina fair

Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair ;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save.

Listen and appear to us
In name of great Oceanus,
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace,
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook,
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old sooth-saying Glaucus' spell,
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands,
By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet,
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,

Tethys was wife of Oceanus and mother of Nereus.

Carpathian wizard, Proteus, a sea-god who had the power of assuming any form he pleased. He had great powers of prophecy, and lived in a cave at Carpathus, an island in the Mediterranean.

Triton, A sea-god, son of Neptune, who blew through a shell to calm the sea.

Glaucus, A fisherman who became a sea-god by eating of a divine herb.

Leucothea, Daughter of Cadmus, founder of Thebes ; she became a sea-goddess. Her son Palæmon was called by the Romans Portumnus, protecting god of ports.

Thetis, A sea-nymph, daughter of Nereus.

Tinsel, Refers to the sparkle of the sea.

Sirens. See note on page 72.

Parthenope and Ligea were two of the Sirens.

A Shorter Milton

Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
Sleeking her soft alluring locks,
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-pav'n bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.

Listen and save.

Sabrina rises, attended by water-nymphs, and sings.

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green
That in the channel strays,
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread,
Gentle Swain at thy request
I am here.

Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distrest,
Through the force, and through the wile
Of unblest enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd 'tis my office best
To help insnared chastity ;
Brightest Lady look on me ;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast

A Mask

Drops that from my fountain pure,
I have kept of precious cure,
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip ;
Next this marble venom'd seat
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold ;
Now the spell hath lost his hold ;
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bow'r.

Sabrina descends, and the Lady rises out of her seat.

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills :
Summer drouth, or singed air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud ;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl, and the golden ore ;
May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come Lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,

Anchises, Father of Æneas of Troy. Milton is claiming relationship for Sabrina with the Trojan heroes, as granddaughter of Brutus the Trojan (see page 91).

A Shorter Milton

Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste, or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground ;
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish'd presence, and beside
All the swains that there abide,
With jigs, and rural dance resort ;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer ;
Come let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's casile ; then come in country dancers, after them the attendant Spirit, with the two Brothers and the Lady.

Song

Spir. Back Shepherds, back, enough your play
Till next sunshine holiday ;
Here be without duck or nod
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise

Duck and nod, The clumsy gestures of country dances, as opposed to more courtly *mincing*.

A Mask

With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns, and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight,
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own ;
Heav'n hath timely tri'd their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth.
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly, and intemperance.

The dances ended, the Spirit epiloguises.

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky :
There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree :
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring ;

Dryades, Wood-nymphs.

Assays, Trials.

Hesperus, The evening star ; in a garden on an island beyond Mount Atlas, his three daughters watched over the golden apples which grew there.

Crisped, Rippled by the wind.

(4,172)

A Shorter Milton

There eternal Summer dwells,
And west winds, with musky wing
About the cedar alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfl'd scarf can show,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits th' Assyrian queen ;
But far above in spangled sheen
· · · · ·
Celestial Cupid her fam'd son advanc'd,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet intranc'd
After her wand'r'ing labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy ; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend,

Iris was the rainbow, messenger of the gods.

Purfl'd, Fringed, embroidered.

Adonis, A beautiful youth, loved by Venus ; he was killed by a wild boar.

Assyrian queen. Venus was worshipped by the Assyrians under the name of Astarte.

Psyche was a maiden beloved by Cupid, god of love. At first she aroused the jealousy of his mother, Venus, but finally she overcame this and was made immortal by Jupiter.

A Mask.

And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.

Mortals that would follow me,
Love Virtue, she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime ;
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heav'n itself would stoop to her.

PARADISE LOST

Book I

THE ARGUMENT

THIS First Book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject, Man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed : then touches the prime cause of his fall, the serpent, or rather Satan in the serpent ; who revolting from God, and drawing to his side many legions of Angels, was by the command of God driven out of heaven with all his crew into the great deep. Which action passed over, the Poem hastens into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his Angels now fallen into hell, described here, not in the centre (for heaven and earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed) but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos : here Satan with his Angels, lying on the burning lake, thunderstruck and astonished, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by him ; they confer of their miserable fall. Satan awakens all his legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded ; they rise ; their numbers, array of battle, their chief leaders named, according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining heaven, but tells them lastly of a new world and new kind of creature to be created, according to an ancient prophecy or report in heaven ; for that Angels were long before this visible creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this prophecy, and what to determine thereon, he refers to a full council. What his

Paradise Lost.—Book I

associates thence attempt. Pandæmonium the palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the deep: the infernal Peers there sit in council.

OF Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing Heav'ly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th'upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the
first

Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
I lumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great argument

Oreb. In the book of Deuteronomy the Law is said to have been given to Moses on Mount Horeb; in the book of Exodus, Moses receives the table of the Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Sion, The hill opposite to Moriah, on which latter the Temple was built. Near by in the valley was the pool of *Siloam*, whose waters rose and fell at intervals.

Aonia, Part of Boeotia, where were Mount Helicon and the fountain Aganippe, the favourite haunts of the Muses.

A Shorter Milton

I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.
Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy
view
Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our grand parents in that happy state,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides ?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt ?
Th' infernal serpent ; he it was, whose guile,
Stirr'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from heav'n, with all his host
Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equall'd the most High,
. If he oppos'd ; and with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Raised impious war in Heav'n and battle proud
With vain attempt. Him the almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th'etheral sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.
Nine times the space that measures day and
night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the fiery gulf
Confounded though immortal : but his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath ; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Torments him ; round he throws his baleful eyes
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
Mixt with obdurate pride and steadfast hate :
At once as far as angel's ken he views
The dismal situation waste and wild ;
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flam'd, yet from those
 flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all ; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd :
Such place eternal justice had prepar'd
For those rebellious, here their prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell !
There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelm'd
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and welt'ring by his side
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd
Beëlzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heav'n call'd Satan, with bold
 words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.
 ‘ If thou beest he ; but O how fall'n ! how
 chang'd
From him, who in the happy realms of light
Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-
shine

A Shorter Milton

Myriads though bright : if he whom mutual
league,

United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
Join'd with me once, now misery hath join'd
In equal ruin : into what pit thou seest
From what hight fall'n, so much the stronger
prov'd

He with his thunder : and till then who knew
The force of those dire arms ? yet not for those
Nor what the potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre ; that fix'd
mind

And high disdain, from sense of injur'd merit,
That with the Mightiest rais'd me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd
In dubious battle on the plains of Heav'n,
And shook his throne. What though the field be
lost ?

All is not lost ; the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate
And courage never to submit or yield :
And what is else not to be overcome ?
That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deify his power
Who from the terror of this arm so late
Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,
That were an ignominy and shame beneath

Paradise Lost.—Book I

This downfall ; since by fate the strength of
gods

And this empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanc'd,
We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal war
Irreconcileable, to our grand foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heav'n.'

So spake th' apostate Angel, though in pain,
Vaunting aloud, but rack'd with deep despair :
And him thus answer'd soon his bold compeer.

' O Prince. O chief of many throned Powers,
That led th' imbatl'd Seraphim to war
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds
Fearless, endanger'd Heav'n's perpetual King ;
And put to proof his high supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate,
Too well I see and rue the dire event,
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat
Hath lost us Heav'n, and all this mighty host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as gods and Heav'nly essences
Can perish : for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
But what if he our conqueror (whom I now
Of force believe almighty, since no less
Than such could have o'erpower'd such force as
ours)

Have left us this our spirit and strength entire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,

A Shorter Milton

Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of war, whate'er his business be
Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,
Or do his errands in the gloomy deep ;
What can it then avail though yet we feel
Strength undiminish'd or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment ? '
Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-fiend re-
ply'd.

' Fall'n Cherub, to be weak is miserable
Doing or suffering : but of this be sure,
To do ought good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil ;
Which oft-times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destin'd aim.
But see ! the angry Victor hath recall'd
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit
Back to the gates of Heav'n : the sulphurous hail
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid
The fiery surge, that from the precipice
Of Heav'n receiv'd us falling, and the thunder,
Wing'd with red lightning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep
Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn,
Or satiate fury yield it from our foe.
Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,

Thralls, Slaves.

Laid, Stilled.

Paradise Lost.—Book I

The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful ? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbour there,
Andreassembling our afflicted powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not what resolution from despair.'

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate
With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blaz'd ; his other parts besides
Prone on the flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanius, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
Briareus, or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' ocean stream :
Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the lee, while night

Titanius. The six Titans, sons of Uranus and Ge (the Earth), contended with Saturn for the sovereignty of Heaven. Saturn's son Jupiter defeated them with his thunderbolts.

Briareus, A hundred-armed giant.

Typhon, A god who wished to acquire sovereignty over gods and men, but was killed by the thunderbolt of Jupiter and buried under Mount Etna.

Tarsus, A city of Asia Minor, birthplace of St. Paul.

Leviathan, A sea-monster (see Job xli.). Milton here uses the word to mean a whale.

Night-founder'd, Benighted.

A Shorter Milton

Invests the sea, and wished morn delays :
So stretch'd out huge in length the Arch-fiend
 lay

Chain'd on the burning lake, nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
On man by him seduc'd, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty stature ; on each hand the flames
Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and
 roll'd

In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
He lights, if it were land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire ;
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
Of thund'ring Ætna, whose combustible
And fuel'd entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublim'd with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoke : such resting found the
 sole

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Of unbless'd feet. Him followed his next mate,
Both glorying to have 'scap'd the Stygian flood,
As gods, and by their own recover'd strength,
Not by the sufferance of supernal power.

' Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,'
Said then the lost Archangel, ' this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful
gloom

For that celestial light ? Be it so, since he
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right : farthest from him is best
Whom reason hath equall'd, force hath made
supreme

Above his equals. Farewell happy fields
Where joy for ever dwells : hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
Receive thy new possessor : one who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he
Whom thunder hath made greater ? Here at
least

We shall be free ; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence :
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell :
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
Th'associates and copartners of our loss
Lie thus astonish'd on th'oblivious pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy mansion, or once more
With rallied arms to try what may be yet

A Shorter Milton

Regained in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell ? '

So Satan spake, and him Beëlzebub

Thus answer'd : ' Leader of those armies bright,
Which but th' Omnipotent none could have
foil'd,

If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft
In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge
Of battle when it rag'd. in all assaults
Their surest signal, they will soon resume
New courage and revive, though now they lie
Groveling and prostrate on yon lake of fire,
As we erewhile, astounded and amaz'd,
No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious highth.'

He scarce had ceas'd, when the superior fiend
Was moving toward the shore ; his ponderous
shield

Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
Behind him cast ; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.
His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast,
Of some great admiral, were but a wand,
He walk'd with to support uneasy steps
Over the burning marle, not like those steps
On Heav'n's azure ; and the torrid clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire ;

Tuscan artist, Galileo.

Fesole, Fiesole, on a hill three miles from Florence.

Valdarno, Val' d'Arno, the valley of the Arno, in which Florence
is situated.

Admiral, The admiral's flagship, the chief vessel of the fleet.

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Nathless he so endur'd, till on the beach
Of that inflamed sea, he stood and call'd
His legions, Angel forms, who lay entranc'd
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
High overarch'd embow'r; or scatter'd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion arm'd
Hath vex'd the Red-sea coast, whose waves
o'erthrew

Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore their floating carcases
And broken chariot wheels, so thick bestrown
Abject and lost lay these, covering the flood,
Under amazement of their hideous change.
He call'd so loud, that all the hollow deep
Of hell resounded. 'Princes, Potentates,
Warriors, the flow'r of Heav'n, once yours, now
lost,

If such astonishment as this can seize
Eternal spirits; or have ye chos'n this place
After the toil of battle to repose
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heav'n?

Vallombrosa, Eighteen miles from Florence in Tuscany, the ancient Etruria.

Orion, A giant hunter, who at his death was placed among the stars. His constellation sets at the beginning of November, a time of storms.

Red-sea. The Hebrew name for the Red Sea is the Sea of Sedge, from the seaweed therein.

Busiris, A Pharaoh of Egypt, who sacrificed all strangers, until he attempted to sacrifice Hercules and was slain by him. Milton here suggests that he was the Pharaoh who pursued the Children of Israel and perished in the Red Sea.

Memphis was one of the chief cities of Egypt.

Chivalry, Cavalry.

A Shorter Milton

Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
To adore the Conqueror ? who now beholds
Cherub and seraph rolling in the flood
With scatter'd arms and ensigns, till anon
His swift pursuers from Heav'n gates discern
Th' advantage, and descending tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf.
Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n.'

They heard, and were abash'd, and up they
sprung

Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.
Nor did they not perceive the evil plight
In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel ;
Yet to their general's voice they soon obey'd,
Innumerable. As when the potent rod
Of Amram's son in Egypt's evil day
Wav'd round the coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,
That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like night, and darken'd all the land of Nile :
So numberless were those bad angels seen
Hovering on wing under the cope of Hell
'Twixt upper, nether and surrounding fires ;
Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted spear
Of their great sultan waving to direct
Their course, in even balance down they light
On the firm brimstone, and fill all the plain ;
A multitude like which the populous north
Pour'd never from her frozen loins, to pass
Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous sons

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Came like a deluge on the south, and spread
Beneath Gibraltar to the Libyan sands.
Forthwith from every squadron and each band
The heads and leaders thither haste where stood
Their great commander ; godlike shapes and
forms

Excelling human, princely Dignities,
And Powers that erst in Heaven sat on thrones ;
Though of their names in heav'nly records now
Be no memorial, blotted out and raz'd
By their rebellion from the books of life.
Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve
Got them new names, till wand'ring o'er the
earth,
Through God's high sufferance for the trial of
man,

By falsities and lies the greatest part
Of mankind they corrupted to forsake
God their creator, and th' invisible
Glory of him, that made them, to transform
Oft to the image of a brute, adorn'd
With gay religions full of pomp and gold,
And devils to adore for deities :
Then were they known to men by various names,
And various idols through the heathen world.

Say, Muse, their names then known, who first,
who last,
Rous'd from the slumber on that fiery couch,
At their great Emperor's call, as next in worth
Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,
While the promiscuous crowd stood yet aloof ?
The chief were those who from the pit of Hell
Roaming to seek their prey on earth, durst fix

Beneath Gibraltar, South of Gibraltar. The Vandals settled in
north Africa.

A Shorter Milton

Their seats long after next the seat of God,
Their altars by his altar, gods ador'd
Among the nations round, and durst abide
Jehovah thund'ring out of Sion, thron'd
Between the Cherubim ; yea, often plac'd
Within his sanctuary itself their shrines,
Abominations ; and with cursed things
His holy rites, and solemn feasts profan'd,
And with their darkness durst affront his light.
First Moloch, horrid king besmear'd with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears,
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud
Their children's cries unheard, that past through
fire

To his grim idol. Him the Ammonite
Worshipp'd in Rabba and her wat'ry plain,
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His temple right against the temple of God
On that opprobrious hill, and made his grove
The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
And black Gehenna call'd, the type of Hell.

Moloch, An idol to whom children were sacrificed, their cries being drowned by the noise of drums.

Arnon. The Arnon flows into the Dead Sea and was the north boundary of Moab. Milton incorrectly supposes the Ammonites to have held all the territory from here to Argob and Basan, which are to the east of the Sea of Galilee. *Rabba* (Rabbath Moab), one of the chief cities of Moab, was south of the Arnon.

Opprobrious hill, The hill south of the Mount of Olives, which lay due east of Mount Moriah, on which the Temple stood (see I. Kings xi. 7).

Hinnom, A valley, south-east of Jerusalem, in which was the king's garden.

Tophet, The place where the refuse of Jerusalem and also the bodies of criminals were burned ; so that it was called Gehenna, the Hebrew name for the place of punishment in the next world.

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moab's sons,
From Aroer to Nebo, and the wild
Of southmost Abarim ; in Hesebon
And Horonaim, Seon's realm, beyond
The flow'ry dale of Sibma clad with vines,
And Eleale to th' Asphaltic pool.
Peor his other name, when he entic'd
Israel in Sittim, on their march from Nile
To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
Yet thence his lustful orgies he enlarg'd
Even to that hill of scandal, by the grove
Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate ;
Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.
With these came they, who from the bord'ring
flood
Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts
Egypt from Syrian ground, had general names
Of Baalim and Ashtaroth, those male,
These feminine : for spirits when they please
Can either sex assume, or both ; so soft
And uncompounded is their essence pure,
Not ti'd or manacl'd with joint or limb,
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
Like cumbrous flesh ; but in what shape they
choose
Dilated or condens'd, bright or obscure,
Can execute their airy purposes,
And works of love or enmity fulfil.
For those the race of Israel oft forsook

Chemos, or Baal-Peor, was a Phoenician god.

Abarim, The mountain range to the east of the Dead Sea, called
the Mountains of Moab. *Nebo* was part of it. *Aroer*, *Hesebon*,
Sibma, and *Eleale* were to the east of the Mountains of Moab.

Asphaltic pool, The Dead Sea.

Sittim, In the Plains of Moab.

Ashtaroth, *Astarte*, The Syrian and Phœnician goddess of the
moon (see I. Kings xi. 5).

A Shorter Milton

Their living strength, and unfrequented left
His righteous altar, bowing lowly down
To bestial gods ; for which their heads as low
Bow'd down in battle, sunk before the spear
Of despicable foes. With these in troop
Came Astoreth, whom the Phœnicians call'd
Astarte, queen of Heav'n, with crescent horns ;
To whose bright image nightly by the moon
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs,
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her temple on th' offensive mountain, built
By that uxorious king, whose heart though large,
Beguil'd by fair idolatresses, fell
To idols foul. Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, suppos'd with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded : the love-tale
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led
His eyes survey'd the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah. Next came one
Who mourn'd in earnest, when the captive ark
Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopt off
In his own temple, on the grunsel edge,
Where he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers :

Uxorius king. Solomon.

Thammuz. The Phœnician Adonis, beloved by Astarte. He was supposed every year to die, and to return to life for six months, a symbol of the revival of nature in summer. The river Adonis rose in the Lebanon Mountains, and when it ran discoloured in flood, it was supposed that this was the blood of Thammuz (see also Ezekiel viii. 14).

Grunsel, Ground sill, threshold.

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Dagon his name, sea monster, upward man
And downward fish : yet had his temple high
Rear'd in Azotus, dreaded through the coast
Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon,
And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.
Him follow'd Rimmon, whose delightful seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks
Of Abbana and Pharnphar, lucid streams.
He also against the house of God was bold :
A leper once he lost and gain'd a king,
Ahaz his sottish conqueror, whom he drew
God's altar to disparage and displace
For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn
His odious off'rings, and adore the gods
Whom he had vanquish'd. After these appear'd
A crew who under names of old renown,
Osiris, Isis, Orus and their train
With monstrous shapes and sorceries abus'd
Fanatic Egypt and her priests, to seek
Their wand'ring Gods disguis'd in brutish forms
Rather than human. Nor did Israel 'scape
Th' infection when their borrow'd gold compos'd
The calf in Oreb : and the rebel king

Dagon, A god of the Philistines (see I. Samuel v. 4).

Azotus (Ashdod), *Gath* and *Ascalon* (Ekron) and *Gaza*,
were cities of the Philistines.

Rimmon, A Syrian god.

Damascus, Chief city of Syria, on the river *Abbana* (Abanah) ;
the *Pharnphar* is farther south.

Leper, Refers to the story of Naaman (II. Kings v. 1-19).

Ahaz, King of Judah, captured Damascus with the aid of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, and brought the worship of Rimmon back to Jerusalem with him (II. Kings xvi. 5-16).

Osiris, The chief Egyptian god, husband of *Isis*.

Orus, The Egyptian sun-god.

Oreb. For the story of the worship of the golden calf by the Children of Israel in Horeb, see Exodus xxxii. 4-28.

Rebel king, Jeroboam, who set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan (I. Kings xii. 28-33).

A Shorter Milton

Doubl'd that sin in Bethel and in Dan,
Lik'ning his Maker to the grazed ox.
Jehovah, who in one night when he pass'd
From Egypt marching, equall'd with one stroke
Both her first-born and all her bleating gods.
Belial came last, than whom a spirit more lewd
Fell not from heaven, or more gross to love
Vice for itself : to him no temple stood
Or altar smok'd ; yet who more oft than he
In temples and at altars, when the priest
Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who fill'd
With lust and violence the house of God.
In courts and palaces he also reigns
And in luxurious cities, where the noise
Of riot ascends above their loftiest tow'rs,
And injury and outrage : and when night
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night
In Gibeah, when hospitable doors
Yielded their matrons to prevent worse rape.

These were the prime in order and in might ;
The rest were long to tell, though far renown'd,
Th' Ionian gods, of Javan's issue held
Gods, yet confess'd later than Heav'n and Earth
Their boasted parents ; Titan Heav'n's first-
born
With his enormous brood and birthright seiz'd
By younger Saturn, he from mightier Jove

Eli's sons. The sons of the high-priest Eli were worthless fellows, and are described as 'sons of Belial' (I. Samuel ii. 12).

Javan. One of the sons of Japhet, from whom the Ionians were descended.

Titan. See note on page 107. Rhea was wife of Saturn. He devoured their children ; but when Jupiter was born she hid him in Crete and gave to Saturn a stone, wrapped up like a child, which he swallowed. Jupiter, when he grew up, overthrew Saturn.

Paradise Lost.—Book I

His own and Rhea's son like measure found ;
So Jove usurping reign'd : these first in Crete
And Ida known, thence on the snowy top
Of cold Olympus rul'd the middle air
Their Highest heav'n ; or on the Delphian cliff,
Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
Of Doric land ; or who with Saturn old
Fled over Adria to th' Hesperian fields,
And o'er the Celtic roam'd the utmost isles.

All these and more came flocking ; but with
looks

Down-cast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd
Obscure some glimpse of joy, to have found their
chief

Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost
In loss itself ; which on his count'nance cast
Like doubtful hue : but he his wonted pride
Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
Semblance of worth not substance, gently rais'd
Their fainted courage, and dispell'd their fears.
Then straight commands that at the warlike
sound

Of trumpets loud and clarions be uprear'd
His mighty standard ; that proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a cherub tall ;
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd
Th' imperial ensign, which full high advanc'd
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind
With gems and golden lustre rich emblaz'd,
Seraphic arms and trophies, all the while

Delphian cliff. Delphi, in Phocis, north of the Gulf of Corinth, where there was the most famous oracle of the ancient world.

Dodona, In Epirus, in the north-west of Greece, where there was an oracle of Jupiter.

Doric land, Greece.
Adria, The Adriatic Sea ; *Hesperian fields* is here used to mean Italy.

Azazel, An evil spirit.

A Shorter Milton

Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds :
At which the universal host up sent
A shout that tore hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand banners rise into the air
With orient colours waving : with them rose
A forest huge of spears : and thronging helms
Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable : anon they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorders ; such as rais'd
To highth of noblest temper heroes old
Arming to battle, and instead of rage
Deliberate valour breath'd, firm and unmov'd
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat,
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
With solemn touches, troubl'd thoughts, and chase
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they
Breathing united force with fixed thought
Mov'd on in silence to soft pipes that charm'd
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil ; and now
Advanc'd in view they stand, a horrid front
Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise
Of warriors old with order'd spear and shield,
Awaiting what command their mighty chief
Had to impose : he through the armed files
Darts his experienc'd eye, and soon traverse
The whole battalion views, their order due,
Their visages and stature as of gods,

Orient, Here means bright. *Serried*, Pressed close together.

Phalanx, The order in which Greek troops advanced to battle.

Dorian mood. The Spartans, who were Dorians, used the solemn
Dorian music as they advanced to battle.

Recorder, A kind of flute.

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Their number last he sums. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength
Glories : for never since created man,
Met such embodied force, as nam'd with these
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warr'd on by cranes : though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were join'd
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mix'd with auxiliar gods ; and what resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son
Begirt with British and Armoric knights ;
And all who since, baptiz'd or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabia. Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
Their dread commander : he above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a tow'r ; his form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Arch-angel ruin'd, and th' excess

Small infantry. A small people, 13½ inches high, said by Homer to live on the shores of the Ocean and to be attacked by cranes in the springtime.

Phlegra. Part of Macedonia, where the Centaurs, half men, half horses, were supposed to have lived.

Thebes. The gods were said to have joined in the battles at Thebes and at *Ilium* (Troy).

Uther's son, King Arthur, son of Uther Pendragon.

Armoric, Of Brittany (Armorica).

Aspramont. These names belong to the romances of Charlemagne, the Frankish Emperor. *Aspramont* is in Limburg; *Montalban* (Montauban), in the south of France; *Damasco*, Damascus; *Trebisond*, in Cappadocia, Asia Minor; *Biserta*, in Tunis, North Africa; and *Fontarabia*, in the Pyrenees, where, Roland and his knights were defeated and Roland killed, at Roncesvalles. Charlemagne was not defeated in this battle, as Milton suggests.

A Shorter Milton

Of glory obscur'd : as when the sun new ris'n
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shone
Above them all th' Arch-angel : but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge : cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd
For ever now to have their lot in pain,
Millions of spirits for his fault amer'd
Of Heav'n, and from eternal splendours flung
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,
Their glory wither'd. As when Heaven's fire
Hath scath'd the forest oaks or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth though bare
Stands on the blasted heath. He now prepar'd
To speak ; whereat their doubl'd ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half inclose him round
With all his peers : attention held them mute.
Thrice he essay'd, and thrice in spite of scorn,
Tears such as angels weep, burst forth : at last
Words interwove with sighs found out their way.

‘ O myriads of immortal spirits, O Powers
Matchless, but with th' Almighty, and that strife
Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,
As this place testifies, and this dire change
Hateful to utter : but what power of mind
Foreseeing or presaging, from the depth
Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd,

Paradise Lost.—Book I

How such united force of gods, how such
As stood like these, could ever know repulse ?
For who can yet believe, though after loss,
That all these puissant legions, whose exile
Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to reascend
Self-rais'd, and repossess their native seat ?
For me, be witness all the host of Heav'n,
If counsels different, or danger shunn'd
By me have lost our hopes. But he who reigns
Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure
Sat on his throne, upheld by old repute,
Consent or custom, and his regal state
Put forth at full, but still his strength conceal'd,
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our
fall.

Henceforth his might we know, and know our
own

So as not either to provoke, or dread
New war, provok'd ; our better part remains
To work in close design, by fraud or guile
What force effected not : that he no less
At length from us may find, who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.
Space may produce new worlds ; whereof so rife
There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation, whom his choice regard
Should favour equal to the sons of Heaven :
Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps
Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere :
For this infernal pit shall never hold
Celestial spirits in bondage, nor th' Abyss
Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
Full counsel must mature : peace is despair'd,
For who can think submission ! war then, war

A Shorter Milton

Open or understood, must be resolv'd.'

He spake : and to confirm his words, outflew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the
thighs

Of mighty Cherubim ; the sudden blaze
Far round illumin'd hell : highly they rag'd
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped
arms

Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n.

There stood a hill not far whose grisly top
Belch'd fire and rolling smoke ; the rest entire
Shone with a glossy scurf, undoubted sign
That in his womb was hid metallic ore,
The work of sulphur. Thither wing'd with speed
A numerous brigade hasten'd. As when bands
Of pioneers with spade and pickaxe arm'd
Forerun the royal camp, to trench a field,
Or cast a rampart. Mammon led them on,
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From Heav'n, for ev'n in Heav'n his looks and
thoughts

Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heav'n's pavement, trodd'n gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoy'd
In vision beatific : by him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
Ransack'd the centre, and with impious hands
Rifl'd the bowels of their mother earth
For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
Op'n'd into the hill a spacious wound,
And digg'd out ribs of gold. Let none admire
That riches grow in Hell ; that soil may best
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those
Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell

Paradise Lost.—Book I

Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,
And strength and art are easily outdone
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour
What in an age they with incessant toil
And hands innumerable scarce perform.
Nigh on the plain in many cells prepar'd,
That underneath had veins of liquid fire
Sluic'd from the lake, a second multitude
With wond'rous art founded the massy ore,
Severing each kind, and scumm'd the bullion
dross :

A third as soon had form'd within the ground
A various mould, and from the boiling cells
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,
As in an organ from one blast of wind
To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.
Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave ; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures grav'n,
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equall'd in all their glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove

Works of Memphian kings, The pyramids of ancient Egypt.

Pilasters, Flat pillars, sunk in the walls of the building.

Doric, The oldest and simplest of the Greek styles of architecture.

Alcairo. Milton implies a city of Egypt, probably Memphis, since Cairo was not built till the tenth century A.D.

Belus, The reputed founder of Babylon.

Serapis, The god of the Nile and of fertility.

A Shorter Milton

In wealth and luxury. Th' ascending pile
Stood fixt her stately highth, and straight the
doors

Op'ning their brazen folds discover wide
Within, her ample spaces, o'er the smooth
And level pavement : from the arched roof
Pendent by subtle magic many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets fed
With naphtha and asphaltus yielded light
As from a sky. The hasty multitude
Admiring enter'd, and the work some praise
And some the architect : his hand was known
In Heav'n by many a tow'red structure high,
Where sceptr'd angels held their residence,
And sat as princes, whom the supreme King
Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,
Each in his hierarchy, the orders bright.
Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
In ancient Greece ; and in Ausonian land
Men called him Mulciber ; and how he fell
From Heav'n they fabl'd, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements : from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day ; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star,
On Lemnos th' Ægean isle : thus they relate,
Erring ; for he with this rebellious rout
Fell long before ; nor aught avail'd him now
To have built in Heav'n high towers ; nor did he
'scape
By all his engines, but was headlong sent

Cresset, A kind of lamp, consisting of an iron cage, in which coils
of rope, impregnated with tar or grease, were burned.

Mulciber. Milton so designates Vulcan, god of fire, who built all
the palaces of the gods on Olympus. *Engines*, Contrivances.

Paradise Lost.—Book I

With his industrious crew to build in hell.

Meanwhile the winged heralds by command
Of sovran power, with awful ceremony
And trumpets' sound throughout the host proclaim

A solemn council forthwith to be held
At Pandæmonium, the high capital
Of Satan and his peers : their summons call'd
From every band and squared regiment
By place or choice the worthiest ; they anon
With hundreds and with thousands trooping
came

Attended : all access was throng'd, the gates
And porches wide, but chief the spacious hall
(Though like a cover'd field, where champions
bold

Wont ride in arm'd, and at the Soldan's chair
Defi'd the best of Panim chivalry
To mortal combat or career with lance)
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees
In spring time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
In clusters ; they among fresh dews and flowers
Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed plank,
The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer
Their state affairs. So thick the airy crowd
Swarm'd and were straiten'd ; till the signal
giv'n,

Behold a wonder ! they but now who seem'd

Panim, Saracen.

Career with lance, Tournament in which the aim of the combatants
was only to break a lance ; not mortal combat.

With Taurus rides. Is in the constellation of the Bull, one of the
signs of the Zodiac.

A Shorter Milton

In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves,
Whose midnight revels, by a forest side
Or fountain some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over head the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course, they on their mirth and
dance

Intent, with jocund music charm his ear ;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.
Thus incorporeal spirits to smallest forms
Reduc'd their shapes immense, and were at large,
Though without number still amidst the hall
Of that infernal court. But far within,
And in their own dimensions like themselves
The great Seraphic lords and Cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave sat,
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,
Frequent and full. After short silence then
And summons read, the great consult began.

*The Indian mount, Imaus, the western Himalayas.
Frequent, Numerous.*

PARADISE LOST

Book II

THE ARGUMENT

THE consultation begun, Satan debates whether another battle be to be hazarded for the recovery of Heaven : some advise it, others dissuade : a third proposal is preferred, mentioned before by Satan, to search the truth of that prophecy or tradition in heaven concerning another world, and another kind of creature equal or not much inferior to themselves, about this time to be created : their doubt who shall be sent on this difficult search : Satan their chief undertakes alone the voyage, is honoured and applauded. The council thus ended, the rest betake them several ways and to several employments, as their inclinations lead them, to entertain the time till Satan return. He passes on his journey to Hell gates, finds them shut, and who sat there to guard them, by whom at length they are opened, and discover to him the great gulf between Hell and Heaven ; with what difficulty he passes through, directed by Chaos, the Power of that place, to the sight of this new world which he sought.

HIGH on a throne of royal state, which far Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous east with richest hand Show'rs on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence ; and from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires

Ormus, An island in the Persian Gulf.

A Shorter Milton

Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain war with Heav'n, and by success untaught
His proud imaginations thus displayed.

‘ Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heav’n,
For since no deep within her gulf can hold
Immortal vigour, though oppress’d and fall’n,
I give not Heav’n for lost. From this descent
Celestial virtues rising, will appear
More glorious and more dread than from no fall,
And trust themselves to fear no second fate :
Me though just right, and the fixed laws of Heav’n
Did first create your leader, next free choice,
With what besides, in council or in fight,
Hath been achiev’d of merit, yet this loss
Thus far at least recover’d, hath much more
Establish’d in a safe unenvied throne
. Yielded with full consent. The happier state
In Heav’n, which follows dignity, might draw
Envy from each inferior ; but who here
Will envy whom the highest place exposes
Foremost to stand against the Thunderer’s aim
Your bulwark, and condemns to greatest share
Of endless pain ? Where there is then no good
For which to strive, no strife can grow up there
From faction ; for none sure will claim in Hell
Precedence, none, whose portion is so small
Of present pain, that with ambitious mind
Will covet more. With this advantage then
To union, and firm faith, and firm accord,
More than can be in Heav’n, we now return
To claim our just inheritance of old,
Surer to prosper than prosperity
Could have assur’d us ; and by what best way,
Whether of open war or covert guile,
We now debate ; who can advise, may speak.’

Paradise Lost.—Book II

He ceas'd, and next him Moloch, sceptr'd king,
Stood up, the strongest and the fiercest spirit
That fought in Heav'n, now fiercer by despair :
His trust was with th' Eternal to be deem'd
Equal in strength, and rather than be less
Car'd not to be at all ; with that care lost
Went all his fear : of God, or Hell, or worse
He reck'd not, and these words thereafter spake :

' My sentence is for open war : of wiles,
More unexpert, I boast not : them let those
Contrive who need, or when they need, not now.
For while they sit contriving, shall the rest,
Millions that stand in arms, and longing wait
The signal to ascend, sit ling'ring here
Heav'n's fugitives, and for their dwelling-place
Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,
The prison of his tyranny who reigns
By our delay ? no, let us rather choose
Arm'd with hell flames and fury all at once
O'er Heav'n's high towers to force resistless way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms
Against the torturer ; when to meet the noise
Of his almighty engine he shall hear
Infernal thunder, and for lightning see
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage
Among his angels ; and his throne itself
Mixt with Tartarean sulphur, and strange fire,
His own invented torments. But perhaps
The way seems difficult and steep to scale
With upright wing against a higher foe.
Let such bethink them, if the sleepy drench
Of that forgetful lake benumb not still,
That in our proper motion we ascend
Up to our native seat : descent and fall
To us is adverse. Who but felt of late

A Shorter Milton

When the fierce foe hung on our brok'n rear
Insulting, and pursu'd us through the deep,
With what compulsion and laborious flight
We sunk thus low ? Th' ascent is easy then ;
Th' event is fear'd ; should we again provoke
Our stronger, some worse way his wrath may find
To our destruction : if there be in Hell
Fear to be worse destroy'd : what can be worse
Than to dwell here, driv'n out from bliss, con-
demn'd

In this abhorred deep to utter woe ;
Where pain of unextinguishable fire
Must exercise us without hope of end
The vassals of his anger, when the scourge
Inexorably, and the torturing hour
Call us to penance ? More destroy'd than thus
We should be quite abolish'd and expire.
What fear we then ? what doubt we to incense
His utmost ire ? which, to the highth enrag'd,
Will either quite consume us, and reduce
To nothing this essential, happier far
Than miserable to have eternal being :
Or if our substance be indeed divine,
And cannot cease to be, we are at worst
On this side nothing ; and by proof we feel
Our power sufficient to disturb his Heav'n,
And with perpetual inroads to alarm,
Though inaccessible, his fatal throne :
Which, if not victory is yet revenge.'

He ended frowning, and his look denounc'd
Desperate revenge, and battle dangerous
To less than gods. On th'other side up rose
Belial, in act more graceful and humane ;
A fairer person lost not Heav'n ; he seem'd
For dignity compos'd and high exploit :

Paradise Lost.—Book II

But all was false and hollow ; though his tongue
Dropp'd manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels : for his thoughts were low ;
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
Timorous and slothful : yet he pleas'd the ear,
And with persuasive accent thus began.

‘ I should be much for open war, O Peers,
As not behind in hate ; if what was urg'd
Main reason to persuade immediate war,
Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast
Ominous conjecture on the whole success :
When he who most excels in fact of arms,
In what he counsels and in what excels
Mistrustful, grounds his courage on despair
And utter dissolution, as the scope
Of all his aim, after some dire revenge.
First, what revenge ? the tow'rs of Heav'n are
fill'd

With armed watch, that render all access
Impregnable ; oft on the bordering deep
Encamp their legions, or with obscure wing
Scout far and wide into the realm of night,
Scorning surprise. Or could we break our way
By force, and at our heels all Hell should rise
With blackest insurrection, to confound
Heav'n's purest light, yet our great Enemy
All incorruptible would on his throne
Sit unpolluted, and th' ethereal mould
Incapable of stain would soon expel
Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire
Victorious. Thus repuls'd, our final hope
Is flat despair ; we must exasperate
Th' Almighty Victor to spend all his rage,
And that must end us, that must be our cure,

A Shorter Milton

To be no more ; sad cure ; for who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion ? and who knows,
Let this be good, whether our angry Foe
Can give it, or will ever ? how he can
Is doubtful ; that he never will is sure.
Will he, so wise, let loose at once his ire,
Belike through impotence, or unaware,
To give his enemies their wish, and end
Them in his anger, whom his anger saves
To punish endless ? wherefore cease we then ?
Say they who counsel war, we are decreed,
Reserv'd and destin'd to eternal woe ;
Whatever doing, what can we suffer more,
What can we suffer worse ? is this then worst,
Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms ?
What when we fled amain, pursu'd and struck
With Heav'n's afflicting thunder, and besought
The deep to shelter us ? this Hell then seem'd
A refuge from those wounds : or when we lay
Chain'd on the burning lake ? that sure was
worse.

What if the breath that kindl'd those grim fires
Awak'd should blow them into sevenfold rage
And plunge us in the flames ? or from above
Should intermitted vengeance arm again
His red right hand to plague us ? what if all
Her stores were op'n'd, and this firmament
Of Hell should spout her cataracts of fire,
Impendent horrors, threat'ning hideous fall
One day upon our heads ; while we perhaps
Designing or exhorting glorious war,

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Caught in a fiery tempest shall be hurl'd
Each on his rock transfix'd, the sport and prey
Of racking whirlwinds, or for ever sunk
Under yon boiling ocean, wrapt in chains ;
There to converse with everlasting groans,
Unrespected, unpitied, unrepriev'd,
Ages of hopeless end ; this would be worse.
War therefore, open or conceal'd, alike
My voice dissuades ; for what can force or guile
With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye
Views all things at one view ? he from Heav'n's
highth

All these our motions vain, sees and derides ;
Not more almighty to resist our might,
Than wise to frustrate all our plots and wiles.
Shall we then live thus vile, the race of Heav'n
Thus trAMPL'd, thus expell'd to suffer here
Chains and these torments ? better these than
worse

By my advice ; since fate inevitable
Subdues us, and omnipotent decree
The Victor's will. To suffer, as to do,
Our strength is equal, nor the law unjust
That so ordains : this was at first resolv'd,
If we were wise, against so great a foe
Contending, and so doubtful what might fall.
I laugh, when those who at the spear are bold
And vent'rous, if that fail them, shrink and fear
What yet they know must follow, to endure
Exile, or ignominy, or bonds, or pain,
The sentence of their conqueror : this is now
Our doom ; which if we can sustain and bear,
Our supreme Foe in time may much remit
His anger, and perhaps thus far remov'd
Not mind us not offending, satisfi'd

A Shorter Milton

With what is punish'd ; whence these raging fires
Will slack'n, if his breath stir not their flames.
Our purer essence then will overcome
Their noxious vapour, or enur'd not feel,
Or chang'd at length, and to the place conform'd
In temper and in nature, will receive
Familiar the fierce heat, and void of pain ;
This horror will grow mild, this darkness light,
Besides what hope the never-ending flight
Of future days may bring, what chance, what
change

Worth waiting, since our present lot appears
For happy though but ill, for ill not worst,
If we procure not to ourselves more woe.'

Thus Belial with words cloth'd in reason's garb
Counsell'd ignoble ease, and peaceful sloth,
Not peace : and after him thus Mammon spake :
‘ Either to disenthrone the King of Heav'n
We war, if war be best, or to regain
Our own right lost : him to unthrone we then
May hope, when everlasting Fate shall yield
To fickle Chance, and Chaos judge the strife :
The former vain to hope argues as vain
The latter : for what place can be for us
Within Heav'n's bound, unless Heav'n's Lord
supreme

We overpower ? suppose he should relent
And publish grace to all, on promise made
Of new subjection ; with what eyes could we
Stand in his presence humble, and receive
Strict laws impos'd, to celebrate his throne
With warbl'd hymns, and to his Godhead sing
Forc'd hallelujahs ; while he lordly sits

Hallelujah, A Hebrew word meaning ‘ praise ye Jehovah.’

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Our envied Sovran, and his altar breathes
Ambrosial odours and ambrosial flowers,
Our servile offerings. This must be our task
In Heav'n, this our delight ; how wearisome
Eternity so spent in worship paid
To whom we hate. Let us not then pursue
By force impossible, by leave obtain'd
Unacceptable, though in Heav'n, our state
Of splendid vassalage, but rather seek
Our own good from ourselves, and from our own
Live to ourselves, though in this vast recess,
Free, and to none accountable, preferring
Hard liberty before the easy yoke
Of servile pomp. Our greatness will appear
Then most conspicuous, when great things of
small,
Useful of hurtful, prosperous of adverse
We can create, and in what place so e'er
Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain
Through labour and endurance. This deep world
Of darkness do we dread ? how oft amidst
Thick clouds and dark doth Heav'n's all-ruling
. . . Sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscur'd,
And with the majesty of darkness round
Covers his throne ; from whence deep thunders
roar,
Must'ring their rage, and Heav'n resembles Hell ?
As he our darkness, cannot we his light
Imitate when we please ? this desert soil
Wants not her hidden lustre, gems and gold ;
Nor want we skill or art, from whence to raise
Magnificence ; and what can Heav'n show more ?
Our torments also may in length of time
Become our elements, these piercing fires

A Shorter Milton

As soft as now severe, our temper chang'd
Into their temper ; which must needs remove
The sensible of pain. All things invite
To peaceful counsels, and the settl'd state
Of order, how in safety best we may
Compose our present evils, with regard
Of what we are and where, dismissing quite
All thoughts of war. Ye have what I advise.'

He scarce had finish'd, when such murmur
fill'd
Th' assembly, as when hollow rocks retain
The sound of blust'ring winds, which all night
long
Had rous'd the sea, now with hoarse cadence lull
Sea-faring men o'erwatch'd, whose bark by chance
Or pinnace anchors in a craggy bay
After the tempest : such applause was heard
As Mammon ended, and his sentence pleas'd,
Advising peace : for such another field
They dreaded worse than Hell : so much the fear
Of thunder and the sword of Michael
Wrought still within them ; and no less desire
To found this nether empire, which might rise
By policy, and long process of time,
In emulation opposite to Heav'n.
Which when Beëlzebub perceiv'd, than whom,
Satan except, none higher sat, with grave
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd
A pillar of state ; deep on his front engraven
Deliberation sat and public care ;
And princely counsel in his face yet shone,
Majestic though in ruin : sage he stood,
With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear

Atlantean, The giant Atlas, who carried the sky and all the stars
on his shoulders.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

The weight of mightiest monarchies ; his look
Drew audience and attention still as night
Or summer's noon-tide air, while thus he spake.

‘ Thrones and imperial Powers, offspring of
Heav'n,

Ethereal Virtues ; or these titles now
Must we renounce, and changing style be call'd
Princes of Hell ? for so the popular vote
Inclines, here to continue, and build up here
A growing empire ; doubtless ; while we dream,
And know not that the King of Heav'n hath
doom'd

This place our dungeon, not our safe retreat
Beyond his potent arm, to live exempt
From Heav'n's high jurisdiction, in new league
Banded against his throne, but to remain
In strictest bondage, though thus far remov'd,
Under th' inevitable curb, reserv'd
His captive multitude : for he, be sure,
In highth or depth, still first and last will reign
Sole King, and of his kingdom lose no part
By our revolt, but over Hell extend
His empire, and with iron sceptre rule
Us here, as with his golden those in Heav'n.
What sit we then projecting peace and war ?
War hath determin'd us, and foil'd with loss
Irreparable ; terms of peace yet none
Vouchsaf'd or sought ; for what peace will be
giv'n

To us enslav'd, but custody severe,
And stripes, and arbitrary punishment
Inflicted ? and what peace can we return,
But to our power hostility and hate,
Untam'd reluctance, and revenge though slow,
Yet ever plotting how the conqueror least

A Shorter Milton

May reap his conquest, and may least rejoice
In doing what we most in suffering feel ?
Nor will occasion want, nor shall we need
With dangerous expedition to invade
Heav'n, whose high walls fear no assault or siege,
Or ambush from the deep. What if we find
Some easier enterprise ? There is a place
(If ancient and prophetic fame in Heav'n
Err not) another world, the happy seat
Of some new race call'd Man, about this time
To be created like to us, though less
In power and excellence, but favour'd more
Of him who rules above ; so was his will
Pronounc'd among the gods, and by an oath,
That shook Heav'n's whole circumference, confirm'd.

Thither let us bend all our thoughts, to learn
What creatures there inhabit, of what mould
Or substance, how endu'd, and what their power,
And where their weakness, how attempted best,
By force or subtlety : though Heav'n be shut,
And Heav'n's high Arbitrator sit secure
In his own strength, this place may lie expos'd,
The utmost border of his kingdom, left
To their defence who hold it : here perhaps
Some advantageous act may be achiev'd
By sudden onset, either with Hell fire
To waste his whole creation, or possess
All as our own, and drive as we were driven,
The puny habitants, or if not drive,
Seduce them to our party, that their God
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand
Abolish his own works. This would surpass

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Common revenge, and interrupt his joy
In our confusion, and our joy upraise
In his disturbance ; when his darling sons
Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse
Their frail originals, and faded bliss,
Faded so soon. Advise if this be worth
Attempting, or to sit in darkness here
Hatching vain empires.' Thus Beëlzebub
Pleaded his devilish counsel, first devis'd
By Satan, and in part propos'd : for whence,
But from the author of all ill could spring
So deep a malice, to confound the race
Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell
To mingle and involve, done all to spite
The great Creator ? but their spite still serves
His glory to augment. The bold design
Pleas'd highly those infernal states, and joy
Sparkl'd in all their eyes ; with full assent
They vote : whereat his speech he thus renews.

' Well have ye judg'd, well ended long debate,
Synod of gods, and like to what ye are,
Great things resolv'd ; which from the lowest
deep
Will once more lift us up, in spite of fate,
Nearer our ancient seat ; perhaps in view
Of those bright confines, whence with neighbour-
ing arms
And opportune excursion we may chance
Re-enter Heav'n ; or else in some mild zone
Dwell not unvisited of Heav'n's fair light
Secure, and at the brightening orient beam
Purge off this gloom ; the soft delicious air,
To heal the scar of these corrosive fires
Shall breathe her balm. But first whom shall we
send

A Shorter Milton

In search of this new world, whom shall we find
Sufficient ? who shall tempt with wand'ring feet
The dark unbottom'd infinite abyss
And through the palpable obscure find out
His uncouth way, or spread his airy flight
Upborne with indefatigable wings
Over the vast abrupt, ere he arrive
The happy isle ; what strength, what art can
then

Suffice, or what evasion bear him safe
Through the strict sentries and stations thick
Of angels watching round ? Here he had need
All circumspection, and we now no less
Choice in our suffrage ; for on whom we send,
The weight of all and our last hope relies.'

This said, he sat ; and expectation held
His look suspense, awaiting who appear'd
To second, or oppose, or undertake
The perilous attempt ; but all sat mute,
Pondering the danger with deep thoughts ; and
each

In others' count'nance read his own dismay
Astonish'd : none among the choice and prime
Of those Heav'n-warring champions could be
found

So hardy as to proffer or accept
Alone the dreadful voyage ; till at last
Satan, whom now transcendent glory rais'd
Above his fellows, with monarchal pride
Conscious of highest worth, unmov'd thus spake.

' O Progeny of Heav'n, empyreal Thrones,
With reason hath deep silence and demur
Seiz'd us, though undismay'd : long is the way
And hard, that out of Hell leads up to light ;
Our prison strong, this huge convex of fire,

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Outrageous to devour, immures us round
Ninefold, and gates of burning adamant
Barr'd over us prohibit all egress.
These pass'd, if any pass, the void profound
Of unessential night receives him next
Wide gaping, and with utter loss of being
Threatens him, plung'd in that abortive gulf.
If thence he 'scape into whatever world,
Or unknown region, what remains him less
Than unknown dangers and as hard escape.
But I should ill become this throne, O Peers,
And this imperial sovranty, adorn'd
With splendour, arm'd with power, if aught
propos'd
And judg'd of public moment, in the shape
Of difficulty or danger could deter
Me from attempting. Wherefore do I assume
These royalties, and not refuse to reign,
Refusing to accept as great a share
Of hazard as of honour, due alike
To him who reigns, and so much to him due
Of hazard more, as he above the rest
High honour'd sits? Go therefore mighty
Powers,
Terror of Heav'n, though fall'n; intend at home,
While here shall be our home, what best may
ease
The present misery, and render Hell
More tolerable; if there be cure or charm
To respite or deceive, or slack the pain
Of this ill mansion: intermit no watch
Against a wakeful foe, while I abroad
Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek
Deliverance for us all: this enterprise
None shall partake with me.' Thus saying rose

A Shorter Milton

The monarch, and prevented all reply,
Prudent, lest from his resolution rais'd
Others among the chief might offer now
(Certain to be refus'd) what erst they fear'd ;
And so refus'd might in opinion stand
His rivals, winning cheap the high repute
Which he through hazard huge must earn. But
they

Dreaded not more th' adventure than his voice
Forbidding ; and at once with him they rose :
Their rising all at once was as the sound
Of thunder heard remote. Towards him they
bend

With awful reverence prone ; and as a god
Extol him equal to the highest in Heav'n :
Nor fail'd they to express how much they prais'd,
That for the general safety he despis'd
His own ; for neither do the spirits damn'd
Lose all their virtue ; lest bad men should boast
Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,
Or close ambition varnish'd o'er with zeal.

Thus they their doubtful consultations dark
Ended rejoicing in their matchless chief :
As when from mountain tops the dusky clouds
Ascending, while the north wind sleeps, o'erspread
Heav'n's cheerful face, the louring element
Scowls o'er the dark'n'd landscape snow, or
shower ;

If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
Extend his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,
The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.
O shame to men ! devil with devil damn'd

Prevented, Forestalled, anticipated.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Firm concord holds, men only disagree
Of creatures rational, though under hope
Of heavenly grace ; and God proclaiming peace,
Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife
Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy :
As if (which might induce us to accord)
Man had not hellish foes enow besides,
That day and night for his destruction wait.

The Stygian council thus dissolv'd ; and forth
In order came the grand infernal peers,
Midst came their mighty Paramount, and seem'd
Alone th' antagonist of Heav'n, nor less
Than Hell's dread emperor with pomp supreme,
And god-like imitated state ; him round
A globe of fiery Seraphim inclos'd
With bright emblazonry, and horrent arms.
Then of their session ended they bid cry
With trumpets' regal sound the great result :
Toward the four winds four speedy Cherubim
Put to their mouths the sounding alchemy
By herald's voice explain'd : the hollow abyss
Heard far and wide, and all the host of Hell
With deaf'ning shout, return'd them loud acclaim.

Thence more at ease their minds and somewhat
rais'd
By false presumptuous hope, the ranged Powers
Disband, and wand'ring, each his several way
Pursues, as inclination or sad choice
Leads him perplex'd, where he may likeliest find
Truce to his restless thoughts, and entertain
The irksome hours, till his great Chief return.
Part on the plain, or in the air sublime

Alchemy, Metal mixed with the chemist's skill.

A Shorter Milton

Upon the wing, or in swift race contend,
As at th'Olympian games or Pythian fields ;
Part curb their fiery steeds, or shun the goal
With rapid wheels, or fronted brigades form.
As when to warn proud cities war appears
Wag'd in the troubl'd sky, and armies rush
To battle in the clouds, before each van
Prick forth the airy knights, and couch their
spears
Till thickest legions close ; with feats of arms
From either end of Heav'n the welkin burns.
Others with vast Typhœan rage more fell
Rend up both rocks and hills, and ride the air
In whirlwind ; Hell scarce holds the wild uproar.
As when Alcides from Echalia crown'd
With conquest, felt th' envenom'd robe, and tore
Through pain up by the roots Thessalian pines,
And Lichas from the top of Oeta threw
Into th' Euboic sea. Others more mild,
Retreated in a silent valley, sing
With notes angelical to many a harp
Their own heroic deeds and hapless fall
By doom of battle ; and complain that fate
Free virtue should enthral to force or chance.

Olympian games. The most famous athletic contests of ancient Greece were celebrated at Olympia.

Pythian. Other games were celebrated at Delphi, in honour of the god Apollo's victory over the Python, a monster, there.

Typhœan. Typhœus was a giant struck by lightning by Jupiter and buried under Mount Etna.

Alcides, Hercules, who married Deianira. She was attacked by the centaur Nessus, but Hercules shot him with an arrow. Deianira steeped a garment in the blood of Nessus, as she had been told that it would enable her to keep the love of her husband. She sent this garment to Hercules, but unfortunately his arrow had poisoned the blood ; so that when he put on the garment he suffered intense agonies, and in his rage threw the bearer, Lichas, into the sea.

Echalia, A town in Eubœa, one of the larger Greek islands.

Oeta, A mountain in Greece to the west of the Euboic Gulf.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Their song was partial, but the harmony
(What could it less when spirits immortal sing ?)
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience. In discourse more
sweet

(For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense,)
Others apart sat on a hill retir'd,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.
Of good and evil much they argu'd then,
Of happiness and final misery,
Passion and apathy, and glory and shame,
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy :
Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm
Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
Fallacious hope, or arm th' obdured breast
With stubborn patience as with triple steel.
Another part in squadrons and gross bands
On bold adventure to discover wide
That dismal world, if any clime perhaps
Might yield them easier habitation, bend
Four ways their flying march, along the banks
Of four infernal rivers that disgorge
Into the burning lake their baleful streams ;
Abhorred Styx the flood of deadly hate,
Sad Acheron of sorrow, black and deep ;
Cocytus, nam'd of lamentation loud
Heard on the rueful stream ; fierce Phlegethon
Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage.

Styx, The river which flowed seven times around the Underworld.

Acheron, A river of the Underworld ; *Cocytus* flowed into it.

Phlegethon, A river in the Underworld which ran with fire instead of water.

A Shorter Milton

Far off from these a slow and silent stream,
Lethe the river of oblivion rolls
Her wat'ry labyrinth, whereof who drinks,
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.
Beyond this flood a frozen continent
Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
Of whirlwind and dire hail, which on firm land
Thaws not, but gathers heap, and ruin seems
Of ancient pile ; all else deep snow and ice,
A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog
Betwixt Damiata and mount Casius old,
Where armies whole have sunk : the parching air
Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of fire.
Thither by harpy-footed Furies hal'd
At certain revolutions all the damn'd
Are brought : and feel by turns the bitter change
Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more
fierce,
From beds of raging fire to starve in ice
Their soft ethereal warmth, and there to pine
Immovable, infix'd, and frozen round,
Periods of time, thence hurried back to fire.
They ferry over this Lethean sound
Both to and fro, their sorrow to augment,
And wish and struggle, as they pass, to reach
The tempting stream, with one small drop to lose
In sweet forgetfulness all pain and woe,
All in one moment, and so near the brink ;

Lethe, A river of the Underworld ; the shades drank of its waters and forgot the past.

Serbonian bog, Lake Serbonis, between Mount Casius (near the isthmus of Suez) and the city of Damiata in Egypt. The sand blew across it and made land indistinguishable from water.

Frore, Frozen.

Furies, The three hideous daughters of Night, who punished the guilty, both in this world and the next.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

But fate withstands, and to oppose th' attempt
Medusa with Gorgonian terror guards
The ford, and of itself the water flies
All taste of living wight, as once it fled
The lip of Tantalus. Thus roving on
In confus'd march forlorn, th' adventurous bands
With shudd'ring horror pale, and eyes aghast
View'd first their lamentable lot, and found
No rest : through many a dark and dreary vale
They pass'd, and many a region dolorous,
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades
of death,

A universe of death, which God by curse
Created evil, for evil only good,
Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, inutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd,
Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimæras dire.

Meanwhile the adversary of God and Man,
Satan with thoughts inflam'd of highest design,
Puts on swift wings, and toward the gates of Hell
Explores his solitary flight ; sometimes
He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the
left,

Now shaves with level wing the deep, then soars
Up to the fiery concave towering high.
As when far off at sea a fleet descri'd

Medusa, One of the Gorgons (see note on page 78).

Tantalus, Son of Jupiter, who, for revealing his father's secrets, was afflicted with a terrible thirst and doomed to stand up to the chin in water, which receded when he tried to drink. (Hence our word *tantalize*.) *Gorgons*. See note on page 78.

Hydras. See note on page 55.

Chimæra, A fire-breathing monster, partly a lion, partly a dragon, and partly a goat, slain by Bellerophon.

A Shorter Milton

Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs : they on the trading flood
Through the wide *Æthiopian* to the Cape
Ply stemming nightly toward the pole. So
seem'd

Far off the flying fiend : at last appear
Hell bounds high reaching to the horrid roof,
And thrice threefold the gates ; three folds were
brass,

Three iron, three of adamantine rock,
Impenetrable, impal'd with circling fire,
Yet unconsum'd. Before the gates there sat
On either side a formidable shape ;
The one seem'd woman to the waist, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold,
Voluminous and vast, a serpent arm'd
With mortal sting : about her middle round
A cry of hell hounds never ceasing bark'd
With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung
A hideous peal : yet, when they list, would creep,
If aught disturb'd their noise, into her womb,
And kennel there, yet there still bark'd and
howl'd

Within unseen. Far less abhorr'd than these
Vex'd Scylla bathing in the sea that parts
Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore :
Nor uglier follow the Night-hag, when call'd

Bengala, Bengal, in North-East India.

Ternate and Tidore, Two of the Spice Islands, or Moluccas, to the east of Celebes. The Dutch brought nutmeg and mace from them to Europe.

Scylla, A monster who lived in the sea between Italy and Sicily.

Calabria, The south-western peninsula of Italy.

Trinacria, Sicily ; the word means 'with three promontories.'

Paradise Lost.—Book II

In secret, riding through the air she comes
Lur'd with the smell of infant blood, to dance
With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon
Eclipses at their charms. The other shape,
If shape it might be call'd that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either ; black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart ; what seem'd his
head

The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast,
With horrid strides, Hell trembled as he strode.
Th' undaunted fiend what this might be admir'd,
Admir'd, not fear'd ; God and his Son except,
Created thing naught valu'd he nor shunn'd ;
And with disdainful look thus first began.

' Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,
That dar'st, though grim and terrible, advance
Thy miscreated front athwart my way
To yonder gates ? through them I mean to pass,
That be assured, without leave ask'd of thee :
Retire, or taste thy folly, and learn by proof,
Hell-born, not to contend with spirits of Heav'n.'

To whom the goblin full of wrath reply'd,
' Art thou that traitor angel, art thou he,
Who first broke peace in Heav'n and faith, till
then
Unbrok'n, and in proud rebellious arms
Drew after him the third part of Heav'n's sons
Conjur'd against the Highest, for which both thou

Lapland. There was supposed to be a horror and a harshness in
the music of Lapland dances. *Labouring,* In her phases.

A Shorter Milton

And they outcast from God, are here condemn'd
To waste eternal days in woe and pain ?
And reck'n'st thou thyself with spirits of Heav'n,
Hell-doom'd, and breath'st defiance here and
scorn,

Where I reign king, and to enrage thee more,
Thy king and lord ? Back to thy punishment,
False fugitive, and to thy speed add wings,
Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart
Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt
before.'

So spake the grisly terror, and in shape,
So speaking and so threat'ning, grew tenfold
More dreadful and deform : on th' other side
Incens'd with indignation Satan stood
Unterrifi'd, and like a comet burn'd,
That fires the length of Ophiucus huge
In th' arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war. Each at the head
Levell'd his deadly aim ; their fatal hands
No second stroke intend, and such a frown
Each cast at th' other, as when two black clouds
With Heav'n's artillery fraught, come rattling on
Over the Caspian, then stand front to front
Hov'ring a space, till winds the signal blow
To join their dark encounter in mid air :
So frown'd the mighty combatants, that Hell
Grew darker at their frown, so match'd they
stood ;
For never but once more was either like
To meet so great a foe : and now great deeds
Had been achiev'd, whereof all hell had rung,

Ophiucus, The Serpent Holder, a constellation of the stars, forty
degrees of the arc of the sky in length.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Had not the snaky sorceress that sat
Fast by hell gate, and kept the fatal key,
Ris'n, and with hideous outcry rush'd between.

‘ O father, what intends thy hand,’ she cry’d,
‘ Against thy only son ? What fury O son,
Possesses thee to bend that mortal dart
Against thy father’s head ? and know’st for
whom ;

For him who sits above and laughs the while
At thee ordain’d his drudge, to execute
Whate’er his wrath, which he calls justice, bids,
His wrath which one day will destroy ye both.’

She spake, and at her words the hellish pest
Forbore, then these to her Satan return’d :

‘ So strange thy outcry, and thy words so
strange
Thou interposest, that my sudden hand
Prevented spares to tell thee yet by deeds
What it intends ; till first I know of thee,
What thing thou art, thus double-form’d, and
why

In this infernal vale first met thou call’st
Me father, and that phantasm call’st my son ?
I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
Sight more detestable than him and thee.’

T’ whom thus the portress of Hell gate reply’d ;
‘ Hast thou forgot me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eye so foul, once deem’d so fair
In Heav’n, when at th’ assembly, and in sight
Of all the Seraphim with thee combin’d
In bold conspiracy against Heav’n’s King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surpris’d thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
Threw forth, till on the left side op’ning wide,

A Shorter Milton

Likest to thee in shape and count'rance bright,
Then shining heav'nly fair, a goddess arm'd
Out of thy head I sprung ; amazement seiz'd
All the host of Heav'n ; back they recoil'd afraid
At first, and call'd me Sin, and for a sign
Portentous held me ; but familiar grown,
I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won
The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing
Becam'st enamour'd, and such joy thou took'st
With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd
A growing burden. Meanwhile war arose,
And fields were fought in Heav'n ; wherein re-
main'd

(For what could else) to our Almighty Foe
Clear victory, to our part loss and rout
Through all the empyrean : down they fell
Driv'n headlong from the pitch of Heaven, down
Into this deep, and in the general fall
I also ; at which time this powerful key
Into my hand was giv'n, with charge to keep
These gates for ever shut, which none can pass
Without my op'ning. Pensive here I sat
Alone, but long I sat not, till my womb
Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown
Prodigious motion felt in rueful throes.
At last this odious offspring whom thou seest
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way
Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
Transform'd : but he my inbred enemy
Forth issu'd, brandishing his fatal dart
Made to destroy : I fled, and cry'd out " Death ; "
Hell trembl'd at the hideous name, and sigh'd
From all her caves, and back resounded " Death."

Paradise Lost.—Book II

I fled, but he pursu'd (though more, it seems,
Inflam'd with lust than rage) and swifter far,
Me overtook his mother all dismay'd,
And in embraces forcible and foul
Ingend'ring with me, of that rape begot
These yelling monsters that with ceaseless cry
Surround me, as thou saw'st, hourly conceiv'd
And hourly born, with sorrow infinite
To me, for when they list into the womb
That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw
My bowels, their repast ; then bursting forth
Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round,
That rest or intermission none I find.
Before mine eyes in opposition sits
Grim Death my son and foe, who sets them on,
And me his parent would full soon devour
For want of other prey, but that he knows
His end with mine involv'd ; and knows that I
Should prove a bitter morsel, and his bane,
Whenever that shall be ; so Fate pronounc'd.
But thou O father, I forewarn thee, shun
His deadly arrow ; neither vainly hope
To be invulnerable in those bright arms,
Though temper'd heav'nly, for that mortal dint,
Save he who reigns above, none can resist.'

She finish'd, and the subtle fiend his lore
Soon learn'd, now milder, and thus answer'd
smooth.

' Dear daughter, since thou claim'st me for
thy sire,
And my fair son here show'st me, the dear pledge
Of dalliance had with thee in Heav'n, and joys
Then sweet, now sad to mention, through dire
change

Dint, Stroke.

A Shorter Milton

Befall'n us unforeseen, unthought of, know
I come no enemy, but to set free
From out this dark and dismal house of pain,
Both him and thee, and all the heav'ly host
Of spirits that in our just pretences arm'd
Fell with us from on high : from them I go
This uncouth errand sole, and one for all
Myself expose, with lonely steps to tread
Th' unfounded deep, and through the void
immense

To search with wand'ring quest a place foretold
Should be, and, by concurring signs, ere now
Created vast and round, a place of bliss
In the purlieus of Heav'n, and therein plac'd
A race of upstart creatures, to supply
Perhaps our vacant room, though more remov'd,
Lest Heav'n surcharg'd with potent multitude
Might hap to move new broils : be this or aught
Than this more secret now design'd, I haste
To know, and this once known, shall soon return,
And bring ye to the place where thou and Death
Shall dwell at ease, and up and down unseen
Wing silently the buxom air, imbalm'd
With odours ; there ye shall be fed and fill'd
Immeasurably, all things shall be your prey.'

He ceas'd, for both seem'd highly pleas'd, and
Death

Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile, to hear
His famine should be fill'd, and blest his maw
Destin'd to that good hour : no less rejoic'd
His mother bad, and thus bespake her sire.

' The key of this infernal pit by due,
And by command of Heav'n's all-powerful King
I keep, by him forbidden to unlock
These adamantine gates ; against all force

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Death ready stands to interpose his dart,
Fearless to be o'ermatch'd by living might.
But what owe I to his commands above
Who hates me, and hath hither thrust me down
Into this gloom of Tartarus profound,
To sit in hateful office here confin'd,
Inhabitant of Heav'n, and heav'nly-born,
Here in perpetual agony and pain,
With terrors and with clamours compass'd round
Of mine own brood, that on my bowels feed :
Thou art my father, thou my author, thou
My being gav'st me ; whom should I obey
But thee, whom follow ? thou wilt bring me soon
To that new world of light and bliss, among
The gods who live at ease, where I shall reign
At thy right hand voluptuous, as beseems
Thy daughter and thy darling, without end.'

Thus saying, from her side the fatal key,
Sad instrument of all our woe, she took ;
And towards the gate rolling her bestial train,
Forthwith the huge portcullis high up drew,
Which but herself not all the Stygian powers
Could once have mov'd ; then in the keyhole
turns

Th' intricate wards, and every bolt and bar
Of massy iron or solid rock with ease
Unfastens : on a sudden open fly
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
Of Erebus. She open'd, but to shut
Excell'd her power ; the gates wide open stood,
That with extended wings a banner'd host

Erebus, The lower world.

A Shorter Milton

Under spread ensigns marching might pass through

With horse and chariots ranked in loose array ;
So wide they stood, and like a furnace mouth
Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame.

Before their eyes in sudden view appear

The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
Illimitable ocean without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and
highth,

And time and place are lost ; where eldest Night
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.

For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions
fierce

Strive here for mast'ry, and to battle bring
Their embryon atoms ; they around the flag
Of each his faction, in their several clans,
Light-arm'd or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift or
slow,

Swarm populous, unnumber'd as the sands
Of Barca or Cyrene's torrid soil,
Levied to side with warring winds, and poise
Their lighter wings. To whom these most adhere,
He rules a moment ; Chaos umpire sits,
And by decision more imbroils the fray
By which he reigns : next him high arbiter
Chance governs all. Into this wild abyss,
The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mix'd
Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight,

Redounding, Curling like waves.

Barca and Cyrene, Cities of Africa to the west of Egypt.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

Unless th' Almighty Maker them ordain
His dark materials to create more worlds,
Into this wild abyss the wary fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell and look'd a while,
Pondering his voyage : for no narrow frith
He had to cross. Nor was his ear less peal'd
With noises loud and ruinous (to compare
Great things with small) than when Bellona
storms,
With all her battering engines bent to rase
Some capital city, or less than if this frame
Of Heav'n were falling, and these elements
In mutiny had from her axle torn
The steadfast earth. At last his sail-broad
vanes
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
Uplifted spurns the ground ; thence many a
league
As in a cloudy chair ascending rides
Audacious, but that seat soon failing, meets
A vast vacuity : all unawares
Flutt'ring his pennons vain plumb down he
drops
Ten thousand fathom deep, and to this hour
Down had been falling, had not by ill chance
The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud
Instinct with fire and nitre hurried him
As many miles aloft : that fury stay'd,
Quench'd in a boggy Syrtis, neither sea,
Nor good dry land : nigh founder'd on he fares,
Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,

Frith, Firth, an arm of the sea.

Bellona, Goddess of war, sister of Mars.

Vanes, Wings.

Syrtis. The Syrtes were two dangerous gulfs on the coast of Africa.

A Shorter Milton

Half flying ; behoves him now both oar and sail.

As when a gryphon through the wilderness
With winged course o'er hill or moory dale,
Pursues the Arimaspians, who by stealth
Had from his wakeful custody purloin'd
The guarded gold : so eagerly the fiend
O'er bog or steep, through straight, rough, dense,
or rare,

With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,
And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies :
At length a universal hubbub wild
Of stunning sounds and voices all confus'd
Borne through the hollow dark assaults his ear
With loudest vehemence : thither he plies,
Undaunted to meet there whatever power
Or spirit of the nethermost abyss
Might in that noise reside, of whom to ask
Which way the nearest coast of darkness lies
Bordering on light ; when straight behold the throne

Of Chaos, and his dark pavilion spread
Wide on the wasteful Deep ; with him enthron'd
Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things,
The consort of his reign ; and by them stood
Orcus and Ades, and the dreaded name
Of Demogorgon ; Rumour next and Chance,
And Tumult and Confusion all imbroil'd,
And Discord with a thousand various mouths.

Gryphon, A fabulous creature, part eagle, part lion, who watched over gold mines.

Arimaspian. The Arimaspians were a one-eyed Scythian people who wore gold ornaments, for which they constantly fought the *gryphons*.

Orcus and Ades (Hades), Names of the Underworld.

Demogorgon, Oldest of the gods, a dweller in the Underworld.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

To whom Satan turning boldly, thus. ‘ Ye
Powers

And Spirits of this nethermost abyss,
Chaos and ancient Night, I come no spy,
With purpose to explore or to disturb
The secrets of your realm, but by constraint
Wand’ring this darksome desert, as my way
Lies through your spacious empire up to light,
Alone, and without guide, half lost, I seek
What readiest path leads where your gloomy
bounds

Confine with Heav’n ; or if some other place
From your dominion won, th’ ethereal King
Possesses lately, thither to arrive

I travel this profound, direct my course ;
Directed, no mean recompense it brings
To your behoof, if I that region lost,
All usurpation thence expell’d, reduce
To her original darkness and your sway
(Which is my present journey) and once more
Erect the standard there of ancient Night ;
Yours be th’ advantage all, mine the revenge.’

Thus Satan ; and him thus the Anarch old
With falt’ring speech and visage incompos’d
Answer’d. ‘ I know thee, stranger, who thou
art,

That mighty leading angel, who of late
Made head against Heav’n’s King, though over-
thrown.

I saw and heard, for such a numerous host
Fled not in silence through the frighted deep
With ruin upon ruin, rout on rout,
Confusion worse confounded ; and Heav’n gates
Pour’d out by millions her victorious bands
Pursuing. I upon my frontiers here

A Shorter Milton

Keep residence ; if all I can will serve,
That little which is left so to defend
Encroach'd on still through your intestine broils
Weak'ning the sceptre of old Night : first Hell
Your dungeon stretching far and wide beneath ;
Now lately Heaven and Earth, another world,
Hung o'er my realm, link'd in a golden chain
To that side Heav'n from whence your legions
fell :

If that way be your walk, you have not far ;
So much the nearer danger ; go and speed ;
Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain.'

He ceas'd ; and Satan stayed not to reply,
But glad that now his sea should find a shore,
With fresh alacrity and force renew'd
Springs upward like a pyramid of fire
· Into the wild expanse, and through the shock
Of fighting elements, on all sides round
Environ'd wins his way ; harder beset
And more endanger'd, than when Argo pass'd
Through Bosphorus betwixt the justling rocks :
Or when Ulysses on the larboard shunn'd
Charybdis, and by th' other whirlpool steer'd.
So he with difficulty and labour hard
Mov'd on, with difficulty and labour he ;
But he once past, soon after when man fell,
Strange alteration ! Sin and Death amain
Following his track, such was the will of Heav'n,
Pav'd after him a broad and beaten way
Over the dark abyss, whose boiling gulf
Tamely endur'd a bridge of wond'rous length

Argo, The ship that took Jason and his company of fifty heroes to
fetch the golden fleece. They passed safely through the *Bosphorus*
strait, the banks of which were supposed to close together and crush
between them ships which tried to pass.

Charybdis. See note on page 72.

Paradise Lost.—Book II

From Hell continu'd, reaching th' utmost orb
Of this frail world ; by which the spirits perverse
With easy intercourse pass to and fro
To tempt or punish mortals, except whom
God and good Angels guard by special grace.
But now at last the sacred influence
Of light appears, and from the walls of Heav'n
Shoots far into the bosom of dim Night
A glimmering dawn ; here Nature first begins
Her farthest verge, and Chaos to retire
As from her outmost works a brok'n foe
With tumult less and with less hostile din,
That Satan with less toil, and now with ease
Wafts on the calmer wave by dubious light
And like a weather-beaten vessel holds
Gladly the port, though shrouds and tackle torn ;
Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,
Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold
Far off th' empyreal Heav'n, extended wide
In circuit, undetermin'd square or round,
With opal tow'rs and battlements adorn'd
Of living sapphire, once his native seat ;
And fast by hanging in a golden chain
This pendent world, in bigness as a star
Of smallest magnitude close by the moon.
Thither full fraught with mischievous revenge,
Accurs'd, and in a cursed hour he hies.

SELECTIONS FROM THE REMAINING BOOKS OF PARADISE LOST

Invocation to Light

HAIL holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of th' Eternal coeternal beam
May I express thee unblam'd ? since God is
light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell ? before the sun,
Before the Heavens thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.
Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,
Escap'd the Stygian pool, though long detain'd
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
Through utter and through middle darkness
borne
With other notes than to th' Orphean lyre
I sung of Chaos and eternal Night,
Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend,
Though hard and rare : thee I revisit safe,
And feel thy sovran vital lamp ; but thou
Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn ;
So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more

Paradise Lost : Selections

Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song ; but chief
Thee Sion and the flowery brooks beneath
That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
Nightly I visit : nor sometimes forget
Those other two equall'd with me in fate,
So were I equall'd with them in renown,
Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.
Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers ; as the wakeful bird
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather thou Celestial light
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

Book III

Thamyris, A Thracian poet who challenged the Muses to a contest and, being defeated, was deprived of his sight.

Mæonides, Another name for Homer.

Tiresias, A blind soothsayer of Thebes.

A Shorter Milton

The Almighty foretells the last Judgment

‘ All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
In Heaven, or Earth, or under Earth in Hell ;
When thou attended gloriously from Heav’n
Shalt in the sky appear, and from thee send
The summoning Archangels to proclaim
Thy dread tribunal : forthwith from all winds
The living, and forthwith the cited dead
Of all past ages to the general doom
Shall hast’n, such a peal shall rouse their sleep.
Then all thy saints assembl’d, thou shalt judge
Bad men and angels, they arraign’d shall sink
Beneath thy sentence ; Hell, her numbers full,
Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. Meanwhile
The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
New Heav’n and Earth, wherein the just shall
dwell

And after all their tribulations long
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
With joy and love triumphing, and fair truth.
Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,
For regal sceptre then no more shall need,
God shall be all in all. But all ye gods
Adore him, who to compass all this dies,
Adore the Son, and honour him as me.’

No sooner had th’ Almighty ceas’d, but all
The multitude of angels with a shout
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy, Heav’n rung
With jubilee, and loud hosannas fill’d
The eternal regions : lowly reverent
Towards either throne they bow, and to the
ground

Paradise Lost : Selections

With solemn adoration down they cast
Their crowns inwove with amaranth and gold,
Immortal amaranth, a flow'r which once
In Paradise, fast by the Tree of Life
Began to bloom, but soon for man's offence
To Heav'n remov'd, where first it grew, there
grows,
And flow'rs aloft shading the fount of life,
And where the river of bliss through midst of
Heav'n
Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream ;
With these that never fade the spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks inwreath'd with
beams,
Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the
bright .
Pavement that like a sea of jasper shone
Impurpl'd with celestial roses smil'd.
Then crown'd again their gold'n harps they took,
Harps ever tun'd, that glittering by their side
Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet
Of charming symphony they introduce
Their sacred song, and waken raptures high ;
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join
Melodious part, such concord is in Heav'n.
Thee Father first they sung omnipotent,
Immutable, immortal, infinite,
Eternal King ; thee Author of all being,
Fountain of light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st
Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st
The full blaze of thy beams, and through a
cloud
Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine,
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,

A Shorter Milton

Yet dazzle Heav'n, that brightest Seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their
eyes.

Book III

Satan views the World

Satan from hence now on the lower stair
That scal'd by steps of gold to Heav'n gate
Looks down with wonder at the sudden view
Of all this world at once. As when a scout
Through dark and desert ways with peril gone
All night ; at last by break of cheerful dawn
Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill,
Which to his eye discovers unaware
The goodly prospect of some foreign land
First seen, or some renown'd metropolis
With glistering spires and pinnacles adorn'd,
Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams.
Such wonder seiz'd, though after Heaven seen,
The Spirit malign, but much more envy seiz'd
At sight of all this world beheld so fair.
Round he surveys, and well might, where he stood
So high above the circling canopy
Of night's extended shade ; from eastern point
Of Libra to the fleecy star that bears
Andromeda far off Atlantic seas
Beyond th' horizon ; then from pole to pole
He views in breadth, and without longer pause
Down right into the world's first region throws
His flight precipitant, and winds with ease
Through the pure marble air his oblique way

Libra, The constellation of the Scales.

Fleecy star, The constellation Aries, the Ram.

Andromeda. The constellation of the Ram is below the constellation Andromeda ; hence 'bears Andromeda.'

Paradise Lost : Selections

Amongst innumerable stars, that shone
Stars distant, but nigh hand seem'd other worlds,
Or other worlds they seem'd, or happy isles,
Like those Hesperian gardens fam'd of old,
Fortunate fields, and groves and flow'ry vales,
Thrice happy isles, but who dwelt happy there
He stay'd not to enquire : above them all
The golden sun in splendour likest heaven
Allur'd his eye : thither his course he bends
Through the calm firmament ; but up or down
By centre, or eccentric, hard to tell.

Book III

Satan's soliloquy after his defeat

' Me miserable ! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair ?
Which way I fly is Hell ; myself am Hell ;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.
O then at last relent : is there no place
Left for repentance, none for pardon left ?
None left but by submission ; and that word
Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
Among the spirits beneath, whom I seduc'd
With other promises and other vaunts
Than to submit, boasting I could subdue
Th' Omnipotent. Ay me, they little know
How dearly I abide that boast so vain,
Under what torments inwardly I groan :
While they adore me on the throne of Hell,
With diadem and sceptre high advanc'd
The lower still I fall, only supreme

A Shorter Milton

In misery ; such joy ambition finds.
But say I could repent and could obtain
By act of grace my former state ; how soon
Would highth recall high thoughts, how soon
 unsay
What feign'd submission swore : ease would
 recant
Vows made in pain, as violent and void.
For never can true reconcilement grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierc'd so
 deep :
Which would but lead me to a worse relapse,
And heavier fall : so should I purchase dear
Short intermission bought with double smart.
This knows my punisher ; therefore as far
From granting he, as I from begging peace :
All hope excluded thus, behold instead
Of us out-cast, exil'd, his new delight,
Mankind created, and for him this world.
So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse : all good to me is lost ;
Evil be thou my good ; by thee at least
Divided empire with Heav'n's King I hold
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign ;
As Man ere long, and this new world shall know.

Book IV

Paradise

In this pleasant soil
His far more pleasant garden God ordain'd ;
Out of the fertile ground he caus'd to grow
All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste ;
And all amid them stood the tree of Life,
High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit

Paradise Lost : Selections

Of vegetable gold ; and next to Life
Our death the tree of Knowledge grew fast by,
Knowledge of good bought dear by knowing ill.
Southward through Eden went a river large,
Nor chang'd his course, but through the shaggy
hill

Pass'd underneath ingulf'd, for God had thrown
That mountain as his garden mould high rais'd
Upon the rapid current, which through veins
Of porous earth with kindly thirst up drawn,
Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill
Water'd the garden ; thence united fell
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,
Which from his darksome passage now appears,
And now divided into four main streams,
Runs diverse, wand'ring many a famous realm
And country whereof here needs no account,
But rather to tell how, if art could tell,
How from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
With mazy error under pendent shades
Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
Flow'r's worthy of Paradise which not nice art
In beds and curious knots, but nature boon
Pour'd forth profuse on hill and dale and plain,
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierc'd shade
Imbrown'd the noontide bow'rs : Thus was this
place,
A happy rural seat of various view :
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and
balm,
Others whose fruit burnish'd with golden rind
Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only, and of delicious taste :

A Shorter Milton

Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd,
Or palmy hillock, or the flow'ry lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
Flow'rs of all hue, and without thorn the rose :
Another side, umbrageous grots and caves
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
Luxuriant ; meanwhile murmuring waters fall
Down the slope hills, dispers'd, or in a lake,
That to the fringed bank with myrtle crown'd,
Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
The birds their choir apply ; airs, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves, while universal Pan
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance
.Led on th' eternal Spring.

Book IV

Evening

Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad ;
Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale ;
She all night long her amorous descant sung ;
Silence was pleas'd : now glow'd the firmament
With living sapphires : Hesperus that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Book IV

Hesperus, The evening star.

Paradise Lost : Selections

Satan's defiance

So threaten'd he, but Satan to no threats
Gave heed, but waxing more in rage repli'd.

' Then when I am thy captive talk of chains,
Proud limitary Cherub, but ere then
Far heavier load thyself expect to feel
From my prevailing arm, though Heaven's King
Ride on thy wings, and thou with thy compeers,
Us'd to the yoke, draw'st his triumphant wheels
In progress through the road of Heav'n star-
pav'd.'

While thus he spake, th' angelic squadron
bright

Turn'd fiery red, sharp'ning in mooned horns
Their phalanx, and began to hem him round
With ported spears, as thick as when a field
Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
Her bearded grove of ears, which way the wind
Sways them ; the careful ploughman doubting
stands

Lest on the threshing floor his hopeful sheaves
Prove chaff. On th' other side Satan alarm'd
Collecting all his might dilated stood,
Like Teneriff or Atlas unremov'd :
His stature reach'd the sky, and on his crest
Sat horror plum'd ; nor wanted in his grasp
What seem'd both spear and shield : now dread-
ful deeds

Might have ensu'd, nor only Paradise
In this commotion, but the starry cope

Ceres, The goddess of the corn.

Teneriffe, An island off the north-west coast of Africa.

Atlas, A mountain range in North Africa.

A Shorter Milton

Of Heav'n perhaps, or all the elements
At least had gone to wrack, disturb'd and torn
With violence of this conflict, had not soon
Th' Eternal to prevent such horrid fray
Hung forth in Heav'n his golden scales, yet seen
Betwixt Astrea and the Scorpion sign,
Wherein all things created first he weighed,
The pendulous round earth with balanc'd air
In counterpoise, now ponders all events,
Battles and realms : in these he put two weights
The sequel each of parting and of fight ;
The latter quick up flew, and kick'd the beam ;
Which Gabriel spying, thus bespake the fiend.
‘ Satan, I know thy strength, and thou know'st
mine,
Neither our own but giv'n ; what folly then
To boast what arms can do, since thine no more
Than Heav'n permits, nor mine, though doubl'd
now
To trample thee as mire : for proof look up,
And read thy lot in yon celestial sign
Where thou art weigh'd, and shown how light,
how weak,
If thou resist.’ The fiend look'd up and knew
His mounted scale aloft : nor more ; but fled
Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of
night.

Book IV

Astrea, The constellation of the Virgin ; the Virgin, the Scales,
and the Scorpion are signs of the Zodiac.

Paradise Lost : Selections

Raphael's journey to Earth

So spake th' eternal Father, and fulfill'd
All justice : nor delay'd the winged saint
After his charge receiv'd ; but from among
Thousand celestial ardours, where he stood
Veil'd with his gorgeous wings, up springing
light
Flew through the midst of Heav'n ; th' angelic
choirs
On each hand parting, to his speed gave way
Through all th' empyreal road ; till at the gate
Of Heav'n arriv'd, the gate self-open'd wide
On golden hinges turning, as by work
Divine the sovran Architect had fram'd.
From hence, no cloud, or, to obstruct his sight,
Star interpos'd, however small he sees,
Not unconform to other shining globes,
Earth and the gard'n of God, with cedars crown'd
Above all hills. As when by night the glass
Of Galileo, less assur'd, observes
Imagin'd lands and regions in the moon :
Or pilot from amidst the Cyclades
Delos or Samos first appearing kens
A cloudy spot. Down thither prone in flight
He speeds, and through the vast ethereal sky
Sails between worlds and worlds, with steady
wing
Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan
Winnows the buxom air ; till within soar
Of tow'ring eagles, to all the fowls he seems

Cyclades, The islands in the *Ægean* Sea, encircling Delos. *Samos*,
an island in the eastern *Ægean* ; actually it is not one of the
Cyclades.

A Shorter Milton

A phœnix, gaz'd by all, as that sole bird,
When to inshrine his relics in the sun's
Bright temple, to Egyptian Thebes he flies.
At once on th' eastern cliff of Paradise
He lights, and to his proper shape returns
A seraph wing'd ; six wings he wore, to shade
His lineaments divine ; the pair that clad
Each shoulder broad, came mantling o'er his breast
With regal ornament ; the middle pair
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold
And colours dipp'd in Heav'n ; the third his feet
Shadow'd from either heel with feather'd mail
Sky-tinctur'd grain. Like Maia's son he stood,
And shook his plumes, that Heav'nly fragrance
fill'd
The circuit wide. Straight knew him all the
bands
Of angels under watch ; and to his state,
And to his message high in honour rise ;
For on some message high they guess'd him
bound.
Their glittering tents he pass'd, and now is come
Into the blissful field, through groves of myrrh,
And flow'ring odours, cassia, nard, and balm ;
A wilderness of sweets ; for Nature here
Wanton'd as in her prime, and play'd at will
Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
Wild above rule or art ; enormous bliss.

Book V

Phœnix, An Arabian bird, which lived for 500 years and then put an end to its life by placing itself on a burning pile of aromatic wood. Out of the ashes a new bird was born, which carried its predecessor's remains to Heliopolis, the temple of the sun, in lower Egypt ; not to Thebes as Milton here suggests.

Maia, Daughter of Atlas, and mother of Mercury.

Paradise Lost : Selections

War in Heaven

To whom in brief thus Abdiel stern repli'd.
' Apostate still thou err'st, nor end wilt find
Of erring, from the path of truth remote :
Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name
Of servitude to serve whom God ordains,
Or Nature ; God and Nature bid the same,
When he who rules is worthiest, and excels
Them whom he governs. This is servitude,
To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebell'd
Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd ;
Yet lewdly dar'st our minist'ring upbraid.
Reign thou in Hell thy kingdom, let me serve
In Heav'n God ever blest, and his divine
Behests obey, worthiest to be obey'd,
Yet chains in Hell, not realms expect : mean-
while
From me return'd, as erst thou saidst, from
flight,
This greeting on thy impious crest receive.'

So saying, a noble stroke he lifted high,
Which hung not, but so swift with tempest fell
On the proud crest of Satan, that no sight,
Nor motion of swift thought, less could his shield
Such ruin intercept : ten paces huge
He back recoil'd ; the tenth on bended knee
His massy spear upstay'd ; as if on earth
Winds under ground or waters forcing way
Sidelong, had push'd a mountain from his seat
Half sunk with all his pines. Amazement seiz'd
The rebel thrones, but greater rage to see

A Shorter Milton

Thus foil'd their mightiest, ours joy fill'd, and shout,
Presage of victory and fierce desire
Of battle : whereat Michael bid sound
Th' archangel trumpet ; through the vast of Heav'n
It sounded, and the faithful armies rung
Hosanna to the Highest : nor stood at gaze
The adverse legions, nor less hideous join'd
The horrid shock : now storming fury rose,
And clamour such as heard in Heav'n till now
Was never, arms on armour clashing bray'd
Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
Of brazen chariots rag'd ; dire was the noise
Of conflict ; over head the dismal hiss
Of fiery darts in flaming volleys flew,
And flying vaulted either host with fire.
So under fiery cope together rush'd
Both battles main, with ruinous assault
And inextinguishable rage ; all Heav'n
Resounded, and had earth been then, all earth
Had to her centre shook. What wonder ? when
Millions of fierce encount'ring angels fought
On either side, the least of whom could wield
These elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions : how much more of power
Army against army numberless to raise
Dreadful combustion warring, and disturb,
Though not destroy, their happy native seat ;
Had not th' eternal King omnipotent
From his stronghold of Heav'n high overrul'd
And limited their might ; though number'd such
As each divided legion might have seem'd
A numerous host, in strength each armed hand

Paradise Lost : Selections

A legion ; led in fight, yet leader seem'd
Each warrior single as in chief, expert
When to advance, or stand, or turn the sway
Of battle, open when, and when to close
The ridges of grim war ; no thought of flight,
None of retreat, no unbecoming deed
That argu'd fear ; each on himself reli'd,
As only in his arm the moment lay
Of victory ; deeds of eternal fame
Were done, but infinite : for wide was spread
That war and various ; sometimes on firm
ground

A standing fight, then soaring on main wing
Tormented all the air ; all air seem'd then
Conflicting fire : long time in even scale
The battle hung ; till Satan, who that day
Prodigious power had shown, and met in arms
No equal, ranging through the dire attack
Of fighting Seraphim confus'd, at length
Saw where the sword of Michael smote, and
fell'd

Squadrons at once, with huge two-handed sway
Brandish'd aloft the horrid edge came down
Wide wasting ; such destruction to withstand
He hasted, and oppos'd the rocky orb
Of tenfold adamant, his ample shield
A vast circumference.

Book VI

The Fifth Day of Creation

And God said, ' Let the waters generate
Reptile with spawn abundant, living soul :
And let fowl fly above the earth, with wings,
Display'd on the op'n firmament of Heav'n.'

A Shorter Milton

And God created the great whales, and each
Soul living, each that crept, which plenteously
The waters generated by their kinds,
And every bird of wing after his kind ;
And saw that it was good, and bless'd them,
saying,

' Be fruitful, multiply, and in the seas
And lakes and running streams the waters fill ;
And let the fowl be multiply'd on the earth.'
Forthwith the sounds and seas, each creek and
bay

With fry innumerable swarm, and shoals
Of fish that with their fins and shining scales
Glide under the green wave, in sculls that oft
Bank the mid sea : part single or with mate,
Graze the seaweed their pasture, and through
groves
Of coral stray, or sporting with quick glance
Show to the sun their wav'd coats dropt with
gold,

Or in their pearly shells at ease, attend
Moist nutriment, or under rocks their food
In jointed armour watch : on smooth the seal,
And bended dolphins play : part huge of bulk
Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait
Tempest the ocean : there Leviathan
Hugest of living creatures, on the deep
Stretch'd like a promontory sleeps or swims,
And seems a moving land, and at his gills
Draws in, and at his trunk spouts out a sea.
Meanwhile the tepid caves, and fens and shores
Their brood as numerous hatch, from the egg that
soon

Paradise Lost : Selections

Bursting with kindly rupture forth disclos'd
Their callow young, but feather'd soon and fledge
They summ'd their pens, and soaring th' air
sublime
With clang despis'd the ground, under a cloud
In prospect ; there the eagle and the stork
On cliffs and cedar tops their eyries build :
Part loosely wing the region, part more wise
In common, rang'd in figure wedge their way,
Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
Their aery caravan high over seas
Flying, and over lands with mutual wing
Easing their flight ; so steers the prudent crane
Her annual voyage, borne on winds ; the air
Floats, as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd
plumes :
From branch to branch the smaller birds with
song
Solac'd the woods, and spread their painted wings
Till ev'n, nor then the solemn nightingale
Ceas'd warbling, but all night tun'd her soft lays :
Others on silver lakes and rivers bath'd
Their downy breast ; the swan with arched neck
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows
Her state with oary feet : yet oft they quit
The dank, and rising on stiff pennons, tow'r
The mid aerial sky : others on ground
Walk'd firm ; the crested cock whose clarion
sounds
The silent hours, and th' other whose gay train
Adorns him, colour'd with the florid hue
Of rainbows and starry eyes. The waters thus
With fish replenish'd, and the air with fowl,
Ev'ning and morn solemniz'd the fifth day.

Book VII

A Shorter Milton

Eve's Lament

' Forsake me not thus, Adam, witness Heav'n
What love sincere, and reverence in my heart
I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
Unhappily deceiv'd ; thy suppliant
I beg, and clasp thy knees ; bereave me not,
Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
Thy counsel in this uttermost distress,
My only strength and stay : forlorn of thee,
Whither shall I betake me, where subsist ?
While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
Between us two let there be peace, both joining,
As join'd in injuries, one enmity
Against a foe by doom express assign'd us,
That cruel serpent : on me exercise not
Thy hatred for this misery befall'n,
On me already lost, me, than thyself
More miserable ; both have sinn'd, but thou
Against God only, I against God and thee,
And to the place of judgment will return,
There with my cries importune Heaven, that all
The sentence from thy head remov'd may light
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
Me, me only just object of his ire.'

She ended weeping, and her lowly plight,
Immoveable till peace obtain'd from fault
Acknowleg'd and deplor'd, in Adam wrought
Commiseration ; soon his heart relented
Towards her, his life so late and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress,
Creature so fair his reconcilement seeking,
His counsel whom she had displeas'd, his aid ;
As one disarm'd, his anger all he lost.

Book X

Paradise Lost : Selections

Michael shows to Adam the kingdoms of the Earth

It was a hill
Of Paradise the highest, from whose top
The hemisphere of earth in clearest ken
Stretch'd out to amplest reach of prospect lay.
Not higher that hill nor wider looking round,
Whereon for different cause the tempter set
Our second Adam in the wilderness,
To show him all earth's kingdoms and their glory.
His eye might there command wherever stood
City of old or modern fame, the seat
Of mightiest empire, from the destin'd walls
Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,
To Paquin of Sinæan kings, and thence
To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul
Down to the golden Chersonese, or where
The Persian in Ecbatan sat, or since
In Hispahan, or where the Russian Ksar
In Mosco, or the Sultan in Bizance,
Turchestan-born ; nor could his eye not ken

Cambalu, Possibly Karakorum, about 300 miles south of Lake Baikal in Central Asia, capital of the empire of Kublai Khan, in whose dominions China (*Cathay*) was included in the thirteenth century A.D.

Samarchand, Samarkand, capital of Timurlane, near the river Oxus in Russian Turkestan. *Temir*, Timur the Lame or Timurlane, Tamberlaine the Great, who assumed the title of Great Khan in 1369.

Paquin, Pekin. *Sinæan*, Chinese.

Mogul. The Moguls were the Mohammedan rulers of India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Golden Chersonese, The Malay Peninsula.

Ecbatan, Ecbatana, chief city of the ancient Medes.

Hispahan, Ispahan, chief city of Persia in the Middle Ages.

Bizance, Byzantium, the earlier name for Constantinople.

A Shorter Milton

Th' empire of Negus to his utmost port
Ercoco, and the less maritime kings,
Mombaza, and Quiloa, and Melind,
And Sofala thought Ophir, to the realm
Of Congo, and Angola farthest south ;
Or thence from Niger flood to Atlas mount
The kingdoms of Almansor, Fez and Sus,
Marocco, and Algiers, and Tremisen ;
On Europe thence, and where Rome was to sway
The world : in spirit perhaps he also saw
Rich Mexico the seat of Motezume,
And Cusco in Peru, the richer seat
Of Atabalipa, and yet unspoil'd
Guiana, whose great city Geryon's sons
Call El Dorado : but to nobler sights
Michael from Adam's eyes the film remov'd,
Which that false fruit that promis'd clearer sight
Had bred.

Book XI

Negus, The emperor of Abyssinia, called by Europeans in Milton's time Prester John.

Ercoco, Harkiko on the Red Sea.

Mombaza, Quiloa, Melind, and *Sofala*, On the east coast of Africa.

Ophir, On the coast of Oman in Arabia.

Angola, On the west coast of Africa.

Almansor, A Moorish sovereign, who ruled over the north-west, and a great part of the north, coast of Africa.

Marocco and *Fez*, On the Atlantic in north-west Africa.

Algiers, Sus (Susa), and *Tremisen*, In north Africa on the Mediterranean.

Motezume, Montezuma, the great Aztec ruler of Mexico, who was overthrown by the Spaniards under Cortés in 1521.

Cusco, Cuzco, capital city of the Inca rulers of Peru. The Inca, Atahualpa (*Atabalipa*), was defeated and put to death by Pizarro and the Spaniards in 1533.

Guiana, On the north coast of South America, whither Sir Walter Raleigh sailed in pursuit of gold.

Geryon's sons, The Spaniards.

El Dorado, The city of Gold, so called from its reputed wealth.

Paradise Lost : Selections

Adam's vision of Wars to come

He look'd and saw wide territory spread
Before him, towns, and rural works between,
Cities of men with lofty gates and tow'rs,
Concourse in arms, fierce faces threat'ning war,
Giants of mighty bone, and bold emprise ;
Part wield their arms, part curb the foaming
steed,
Single or in array of battle rang'd
Both horse and foot, nor idly must'ring stood ;
One way a band select from forage drives
A herd of beeves, fair oxen and fair kine
From a fat meadow ground ; or fleecy flock,
Ewes and their bleating lambs over the plain,
Their booty ; scarce with life the shepherds fly,
But call in aid, which tacks a bloody fray.
With cruel tournament the squadrons join ;
Where cattle pastur'd late, now scatter'd lies
With carcasses and arms th' ensanguin'd field
Deserted : Others to a city strong
Lay siege, encamp'd ; by battery, scale, and
mine,
Assaulting ; others from the wall defend
With dart and jav'lin, stones and sulphurous fire ;
On each hand slaughter and gigantic deeds.
In other part the sceptr'd heralds call
To council in the city gates : anon
Gray-headed men and grave, with warriors mix'd,
Assemble, and harangues are heard, but soon
In factious opposition, till at last
Of middle age one rising, eminent
In wise deport, spake much of right and wrong,
Of justice, of religion, truth and peace,

A Shorter Milton

And judgment from above : him old and young
Exploded, and had seiz'd with violent hands,
Had not a cloud descending snatch'd him thence,
Unseen amid the throng : so violence
Proceeded, and oppression, and sword-law
Through all the plain, and refuge none was found.
Adam was all in tears, and to his guide
Lamenting turn'd full sad ; ' O what are these,
Death's ministers, not men, who thus deal death
Inhumanly to men, and multiply
Ten thousand fold the sin of him who slew
His brother ; for of whom such massacre
Make they but of their brethren, men of men ? '

Book XI

Michael's Prophecy of Christ's Nativity

'At his birth a star
Unseen before in Heav'n proclaims him come,
And guides the eastern sages, who enquire
His place, to offer incense, myrrh, and gold ;
His place of birth a solemn angel tells
To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night ;
They gladly thither haste, and by a choir
Of squadron'd angels hear his carol sung.
A virgin is his mother, but his sire
The power of the most High ; he shall ascend
The throne hereditary, and bound his reign
With earth's wide bounds, his glory with the
Heav'ns.'

He ceas'd, discerning Adam with such joy
Surcharg'd, as had like grief been dew'd in tears,
Without the vent of words, which these he
breath'd.

Paradise Lost : Selections

' O prophet of glad tidings, finisher
Of utmost hope ! now clear I understand
What oft my steadiest thoughts have search'd in
vain,
Why our great expectation should be call'd
The seed of woman : Virgin Mother, hail,
High in the love of Heav'n, yet from my loins
Thou shalt proceed, and from thy womb the Son
Of God most high ; so God with man unites.
Needs must the serpent now his capital bruise
Expect with mortal pain : say where and when
Their fight, what stroke shall bruise the victor's
heel.'

Book XII

SELECTIONS FROM PARADISE REGAINED

Satan meets Christ in the Wilderness

So spake our Morning Star then in his rise,
And looking round on every side beheld
A pathless desert, dusk with horrid shades ;
The way he came not having mark'd, return
Was difficult, by human steps untrod ;
And he still on was led, but with such thoughts
Accompanied of things past and to come
Lodg'd in his breast, as well might recommend
Such solitude before choicest society.

Full forty days he pass'd, whether on hill
Sometimes, anon in shady vale, each night
Under the covert of some ancient oak,
Or cedar, to defend him from the dew,
Or harbour'd in one cave, is not reveal'd ;
Nor tasted human food, nor hunger felt
Till those days ended, hunger'd then at last
Among wild beasts : they at his sight grew mild,
Nor sleeping him nor waking harm'd, his walk
The fiery serpent fled, and noxious worm,
The lion and fierce tiger glar'd aloof.
But now an aged man in rural weeds,
Following, as seem'd, the quest of some stray ewe,
Or wither'd sticks to gather ; which might serve
Against a winter's day when winds blow keen,
To warm him wet return'd from field at eve,
He saw approach, who first with curious eye
Perus'd him, then with words thus utt'red spake.

Paradise Regained : Selections

' Sir, what ill chance hath brought thee to this place

So far from path or road of men, who pass
In troop or caravan, for single none
Durst ever, who return'd, and dropt not here
His carcass, pin'd with hunger and with drouth ?
I ask the rather, and the more admire,
For that to me thou seem'st the man, whom late
Our new baptizing prophet at the ford
Of Jordan honour'd so, and call'd thee Son
Of God ; I saw and heard, for we sometimes
Who dwell this wild, constrain'd by want, come forth

To town or village nigh (nighest is far)
Where aught we hear, and curious are to hear,
What happ'ns new ; fame also finds us out.'

To whom the Son of God. ' Who brought me hither

Will bring me hence, no other guide I seek.'

' By miracle he may,' reply'd the swain,
' What other way I see not, for we here
Live on tough roots and stubs, to thirst inur'd
More than the camel, and to drink go far,
Men to much misery and hardship born ;
But if thou be the Son of God, command
That out of these hard stones be made thee bread ;

So shalt thou save thyself and us relieve
With food, whereof we wretched seldom taste.'

He ended, and the Son of God reply'd.
' Think'st thou such force in bread ? is it not written

(For I discern thee other than thou seem'st)
Man lives not by bread only, but each word
Proceeding from the mouth of God ; who fed

A Shorter Milton

Our fathers here with manna ; in the mount
Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank,
And forty days Elijah without food
Wander'd this barren waste, the same I now :
Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust,
Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art ? '

Book I

The Vanity of earthly Glory

For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The people's praise, if always praise unmix'd ?
And what the people but a herd confus'd,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
Things vulgar, and well weigh'd, scarce worth the
praise,
They praise and they admire they know not
what ;
And know not whom, but as one leads the other ;
And what delight to be by such extoll'd,
To live upon their tongues and be their talk,
Of whom to be disprais'd were no small praise ?
His lot who dares be singularly good.
Th' intelligent among them and the wise
Are few, and glory scarce of few is rais'd.
This is true glory and renown, when God
Looking on the earth, with approbation marks
The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
To all his angels, who with true applause
Recount his praises ; thus he did to Job,
When to extend his fame through Heaven and
Earth,
As thou to thy reproach may'st well remember,
He ask'd thee, ' Hast thou seen my servant
Job ? '

Paradise Regained : Selections

Famous he was in Heaven, on Earth less known ;
Where glory is false glory, attributed
To things not glorious, men not worthy of fame.
They err who count it glorious to subdue
By conquest far and wide, to overrun
Large countries, and in field great battles win,
Great cities by assault : what do these worthies,
But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
Peaceable nations, neighbouring, or remote,
Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
Than those their conquerors, who leave behind
Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,
And all the flourishing works of peace destroy.

Book III

SAMSON AGONISTES

THE ARGUMENT

SAMSON made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retired there to sit a while and bemoan his condition. Where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can ; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom ; lastly, that this feast was proclaimed by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption ; who in the meanwhile is visited by other persons ; and lastly by a public officer to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or show his strength in their presence ; he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come ; at length persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him ; the chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoah returns full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance : in the midst of which discourse a Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first ; and afterward more distinctly relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself ; wherewith the tragedy ends.

Samson Agonistes

The Persons

Samson.

Manoah *the Father of Samson.*

Dalila *his Wife.*

Harapha *of Gath.*

Public Officer.

Messenger.

Chorus *of Danites.*

The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.

Sams. A little onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps, a little further on ;
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade,
There I am wont to sit, when any chance
Relieves me from my task of servile toil,
Daily in the common prison else enjoin'd me,
Where I a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught : but here I feel amends,
The breath of Heav'n fresh-blowing, pure and
sweet,

With day-spring born ; here leave me to respire.
This day a solemn feast the people hold
To Dagon their sea-idol, and forbid
Laborious works, unwillingly this rest
Their superstition yields me ; hence with leave
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease,
Ease to the body some, none to the mind

Danites. Dan was one of the twelve tribes of Israel and was assigned land to the north of the country of the Philistines, who held a strip of the Mediterranean coast in the south-west of Palestine.

Gaza, The chief city of the Philistines.

A Shorter Milton

From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.
O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
Twice by an angel, who at last in sight
Of both my parents all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an off'ring burn'd,
As in a fiery column charioting
His godlike presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race ?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits ; if I must die
Betray'd, captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze ;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this Heav'n-gifted strength ? O glorious
strength
Put to the labour of a beast, debas'd
Lower than bond-slave ! Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver ;
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke ;
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction ; what if all foretold
Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but myself ?
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it
O'ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong !

Samson Agonistes

But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom, vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command.
God, when he gave me strength, to show withal
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.
But peace, I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Haply had ends above my reach to know :
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
And proves the source of all my miseries ;
So many, and so huge, that each apart
Would ask a life to wail, but chief of all,
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain !
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age !
Light the prime work of God to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annulld', which might in part my grief have
eas'd,
Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm ; the vilest here excel me,
They creep, yet see, I dark in light expos'd
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong,
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own ;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day !
O first created beam, and thou great Word,
' Let there be light,' and light was over all ;
Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree ?
The sun to me is dark

A Shorter Milton

And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part ; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd ?
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd,
And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,
That she might look at will through every pore ?
Then had I not been thus exil'd from light ;
As in the land of darkness yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And buried ; but O yet more miserable !
Myself, my sepulchre, a moving grave,
Buried, yet not exempt
By privilege of death and burial
From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs,
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes.
But who are these ? for with joint pace I hear
The tread of many feet steering this way ;
Perhaps my enemies who come to stare
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,
Their daily practice to afflict me more.
Chor. This, this is he ; softly a while,

Chorus. Milton introduces here a chorus after the manner of Greek tragedy. The chorus remains on the stage throughout the rest of the play, or rather in a special place assigned to them, to the front of, and below, the stage on which the other actors appear. The chorus of twelve or fifteen persons would not all speak all the lines assigned to them ; in some cases, where it might seem more suitable, only the leader of the chorus would speak.

Samson Agonistes

Let us not break in upon him ;
O change beyond report, thought, or belief !
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,
With languish'd head unprop'd,
As one past hope, abandon'd
And by himself given over ;
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
O'er worn and soil'd ;
Or do my eyes misrepresent ? Can this be he,
That heroic, that renown'd,
Irresistible Samson ? whom unarm'd
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could
withstand ;
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid,
Ran on imbattl'd armies clad in iron,
And weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail
Adamantean proof ;
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanc'd,
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold
Ascalonite
Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors turn'd
Their plated backs under his heel ;
Or grov'ling soil'd their crested helmets in the
dust.

Cuirass, Breast and back plates of metal, as worn nowadays by the Horse Guards.

Chalybean. The Chalybes lived along the south shore of the Black Sea, and were noted metal workers.

Adamantean. 'Adamant' is derived from a Greek word for the hardest metal, steel.

Ascalonite. Ascalon (Ashkelon) was one of the five royal cities of the Philistines.

A Shorter Milton

Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,
A thousand fell, the flower of Palestine
In Ramath-lechi famous to this day :
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders
bore

The gates of Azza, post, and massy bar
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,
No journey of a Sabbath day, and loaded so ;
Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n.
Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark ?
Thou are become (O worst imprisonment !)
The dungeon of thyself ; thy soul
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause
complain)
Imprison'd now indeed,
In real darkness of the body dwells,
Shut up from outward light
To incorporate with gloomy night ;
For inward light alas
Puts forth no visual beam.
O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth unparalleled !
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,

Ramath-lechi, The place where Samson slaughtered a thousand of the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.

Azza, Another name for Gaza.

Hebron, Nearly twenty miles south of Jerusalem and one of the oldest cities in the world still in existence. Arba, the ancestor of the giants, Anakim, was supposed to have lived there.

Gentiles, The Hebrew name for non-Hebrews.

Feign to bear. Refers to the giant Atlas, who carried the heavens on his shoulders.

Samson Agonistes

Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n.
For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth
Or the sphere of fortune raises ;
But thee whose strength, while virtue was her
mate

Might have subdu'd the earth,
Universally crown'd with highest praises.

Sams. I hear the sound of words, their sense the
air

Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.

Chor. He speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless
in might,

The glory late of Israel, now the grief ;
We come thy friends and neighbours not un-
known

From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale
To visit or bewail thee, or if better,
Counsel or consolation we may bring,
Salve to thy sores, apt words have power to
swage

The tumours of a troubl'd mind,
And are as balm to fester'd wounds.

Sams. Your coming, friends, revives me, for I
learn

Now of my own experience, not by talk,
How counterfeit a coin they are who friends
Bear in their superscription (of the most
I would be understood) in properous days
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head
Not to be found, though sought. Ye, see, O
friends,

Eshtaol and Zora, Sea-coast towns in the territory of Dan, where
Samson spent his boyhood.

A Shorter Milton

How many evils have inclos'd me round ;
Yet that which was the worse now least afflicts
me,

Blindness, for had I sight, confus'd with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who like a foolish pilot have shipwreck'd,
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd ; and for a word, a tear,
Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman : tell me friends,
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
In every street, do they not say, how well
Are come upon him his deserts ? yet why ?
Immeasurable strength they might behold
In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean ;
This with the other should, at least, have pair'd,
These two proportion'd ill drove me transverse.

Chor. Tax not divine disposal, wisest men
Have err'd, and by bad women been deceiv'd ;
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides ;
Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

Sams. The first I saw at Timna, and she
pleas'd
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed,
The daughter of an infidel : they knew not
That what I motion'd was of God ; I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd
The marriage on ; that by occasion hence

Timna (Timnah), A town in the country of the tribe of Judah,
near the western border of the country of the Philistines.

Samson Agonistes

I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely call'd ;
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O that I never had ! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end ; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors : of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who vanquish'd with a peal of words (O weak-
ness !)

Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

Chor. In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness :
Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.

Sams. That fault I take not on me, but transfer
On Israel's governors, and heads of tribes,
Who seeing those great acts which God had
done

Singly by me against their conquerors
Acknowleg'd not, or not at all consider'd
Deliverance offer'd : I on th' other side
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud
the doer ;
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
To count them things worth notice, till at length
Their lords the Philistines with gather'd powers
Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,

Sorec, A valley or wady not far from Gaza.

Etham, A rock above Ramath-lechi ; Samson retired to a chasm
of it after his slaughter of the Philistines.

A Shorter Milton

Not flying, but forecasting in what place
To set upon them, what advantag'd best ;
Meanwhile the men of Judah to prevent
The harass of their land, beset me round ;
I willingly on some conditions came
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me
To the uncircumcis'd a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords ; but cords to me were
threads
Touch'd with the flame : on their whole host I
flew

Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd
Their choicest youth ; they only liv'd who fled.
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom now they serve ;
But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty ;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd
As their deliverer ; if he aught begin,
How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds ?

Chor. Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel
Their great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Of Midian and her vanquish'd kings :
And how ingrateful Ephraim

Gath, One of the five royal cities of the Philistines in the north-east of their territory, and west of Jerusalem.

Succoth. The princes of Succoth and Penuel refused to give bread to the troops of Gideon when he drove the Midianites across Jordan through their territory (Judges viii. 4-9).

Samson Agonistes

Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battle when so many died
Without reprieve adjug'd to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.

Sams. Of such examples add me to the roll,
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's propos'd deliverance not so.

Chor. Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men ;
Unless there be who think not God at all,
If any be, they walk obscure ;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.

Yet more there be who doubt his ways not
just,
As to his own edicts, found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wand'ring thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution ;
Till by their own perplexities involv'd
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine th' interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt

Jephtha. The men of Ephraim left Jephthah and the men of Gilead to fight the Ammonites alone ; and afterwards, when they accused him of not calling them to his aid, he turned on them and defeated them (Judges xii. 1-6). The word *shibboleth* means a stream or flood, and the men of Gilead used it, in the battle against the men of Ephraim, as a test word to tell friend from foe, since in the dialect of Ephraim the 'sh' was pronounced as an 's.'

A Shorter Milton

Whomso it pleases him by choice
From national obstriction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt ;
For with his own laws he can best dispense.

He would not else who never wanted means,
Nor in respect of the enemy just cause
To set his people free,
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,
Against his vow of strictest purity,
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,
Unclean, unchaste.

Down Reason then, at least vain reasonings
down,
Though Reason here aver
That moral verdict quits her of unclean :
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain not his.

But see here comes thy reverend sire
With careful step, locks white as down,
Old Manoah : advise
Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive him.

Sams. Aye me, another inward grief awak'd,
With mention of that name renews th' assault.

Man. Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye
seem,
Though in this uncouth place ; if old respect,
As I suppose, towards your once gloried friend,
My son now captive, hither hath inform'd
Your younger feet, while mine cast back with
age

Came lagging after ; say if he be here.

Chor. As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in highest, behold him where he lies.

Man. O miserable change ! is this the man,

Nazarite, A Jew who took a special vow to devote himself to the
service of God.

Samson Agonistes

That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels' walk'd their streets,
None offering fight ; who single combatant
Duell'd their armies rank'd in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal match
To save himself against a coward arm'd
At one spear's length. O ever failing trust
In mortal strength ! and oh what not in man
Deceivable and vain ! Nay what thing good
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane ?
I pray'd for children, and thought barrenness
In wedlock a reproach ; I gain'd a son,
And such a son as all men hail'd me happy ;
Who would be now a father in my stead ?
O wherefore did God grant me my request,
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd ?
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
Our earnest prayers, then giv'n with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind ?
For this did the angel twice descend ? for this
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant ;
Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men : then in an hour
Ensnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves ?
Alas methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

Sams. Appoint not heavenly disposition, father,
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
But justly ; I myself have brought them on,

A Shorter Milton

Sole author I, sole cause : if aught seem vile
As vile hath been my folly, who have profan'd
The mystery of God giv'n me under pledge
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.

This well I knew, nor was at all surpris'd,
But warn'd by oft experience : did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The secret wrested from me in her highth
Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it straight
To them who had corrupted her, my spies,
And rivals ? In this other was there found
More faith ? who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
Though offer'd only, by the scent conceiv'd
Her spurious first-born treason against me ?
Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and
sighs,

And amorous reproaches to win from me
My capital secret, in what part my strength
Lay stor'd in what part summ'd, that she might
know :

Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was
worse

Than undissembl'd hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself ;
Yet the fourth time, when must'ring all her wiles,
With blandish'd parleys, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me over-watch'd, and wearied out.
At times when men seek most repose and rest,
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,

Samson Agonistes

Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd
Might easily have shook off all her snares :
But foul effeminacy held me yok'd
Her bond-slave ; O indignity, O blot
To honour and religion ! servile mind
Rewarded well with servile punishment !
The base degree to which I now am fall'n,
These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base
As was my former servitude, ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
That saw not how degenerately I serv'd.

Man. I cannot praise thy marriage choices, son,
Rather approv'd them not ; but thou didst plead
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st
Find some occasion to infest our foes.
I state not that ; this I am sure ; our foes
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
Their captive and their triumph ; thou the sooner
Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms
To violate the sacred trust of silence
Deposited within thee ; which to have kept
Facit, was in thy power ; true ; and thou bear'st
Enough, and more the burden of that fault ;
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains,
This day the Philistines a popular feast
Here celebrate in Gaza ; and proclaim
Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud
To Dagon, as their god who hath deliver'd
Thee Samson bound and blind into their hands,
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a
slain.

So Dagon shall be magnifi'd, and God,,
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with idols,

A Shorter Milton

Disglorifi'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn
By th' idolatrous rout amidst their wine ;
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
Could have befall'n thee and thy father's house.

Sams. Father, I do acknowledge and confess
That I this honour, I this pomp have brought
To Dagon, and advanc'd his praises high
Among the heathen round ; to God have brought
Dishonour, obloquy, and op'd the mouths
Of idolists, and atheists ; have brought scandal
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
In feeble hearts, propense enough before
To waver, or fall off and join with idols :
Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.
This only hope relieves me, that the strife
With me hath end ; all the contest is now
'Twixt God and Dagon ; Dagon hath presum'd,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive, or linger, thus provok'd,
But will arise and his great name assert :
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worshippers.

Man. With cause this hope relieves thee, and
these words
I as a prophecy receive : for God,

Samson Agonistes

Nothing more certain, will not long defer
To vindicate the glory of his name
Against all competition, nor will long
Endure it, doubtful whether God be lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done ?
Thou must not in the meanwhile here forgot
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
About thy ransom : well they may by this
Have satisfi'd their utmost of revenge
By pains and slaveries, worse than death inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.

Sams. Spare that proposal, father, spare the trouble
Of that solicitation ; let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment ;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,
The mark of fool set on his front ?
But I God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret
Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully : a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn
To their abyss and horrid pains confin'd.

Man. Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,
But act not in thy own affliction, son,
Repent the sin, but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids ;
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact

A Shorter Milton

Thy penal forfeit from thyself ; perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt ;
Who evermore approves and more accepts
(Best pleas'd with humble and filial submission)
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,
Than who self-rigorous chooses death as due ;
Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd
For self-offence, more than for God offended.
Reject not then what offer'd means, who knows
But God hath set before us, to return thee
Home to thy country and his sacred house,
Where thou may'st bring thy off'rings, to avert
His further ire, with prayers and vows renew'd.

Sams. His pardon I implore ; but as for life,
To what end should I seek it ? when in strength
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes
.With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts
Of birth from Heav'n foretold and high exploits,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
The sons of Anak, famous now and blaz'd,
Fearless of danger, like a petty god
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.
Then swell'n with pride into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
Softn'd with pleasure and voluptuous life ;
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine who shore me
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
Shav'n, and disarm'd among my enemies.

Samson Agonistes

Chor. Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
Which many a famous warrior overturns,
Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing ruby
Sparkling, out-pour'd, the flavour, or the smell,
Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,
Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

Sams. Wherever fountain or fresh current
flow'd

Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure,
With touch ethereal of Heav'n's fiery rod
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying
Thirst, and refresh'd; nor envy'd them the
grape
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with
fumes.

Chor. O madness, to think use of strongest
wines

And strongest drinks our chief support of health,
When God with these forbidd'n made choice to
rear

His mighty champion, strong above compare,
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.

Sams. But what avail'd this temperance, not
complete

Against another object more enticing ?
What boots it at one gate to make defence,
And at another to let in the foe
Effeminately vanquish'd ? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonour'd,
quell'd,

To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd,
But to sit idle on the household hearth,
A burdenous drone ; to visitants a gaze,
Or pitied object, these redundant locks

A Shorter Milton

Robustious to no purpose clust'ring down,
Vain monument of strength ; till length of years
And sedentary numbness craze my limbs
To a contemptible old age obscure.
Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,
Till vermin or the draf^f of servile food
Consume me, and oft-invocated death
Hast'n the welcome end of all my pains.

Man. Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with
that gift

Which was expressly giv'n thee to annoy them ?
Better at home lie bedrid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn.
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to allay
After the brunt of battle, can as easy
Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast ;
And I persuade me so ; why else this strength
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks ?
His might continues in thee not for nought,
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

Sams. All otherwise to me my thoughts por-
tend,

That these dark orbs no more shall treat with
light,
Nor th' other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand :
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself ;
My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

Samson Agonistes

Man. Believe not these suggestions which proceed

From anguish of the mind and humours black,
That mingle with thy fancy. I however
Must not omit a father's timely care
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance
By ransom or how else : meanwhile be calm,
And healing words from these thy friends
admit.

Sams. O that torment should not be confin'd
To the body's wounds and sores
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast, and reins ;
But must secret passage find
To th' inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporal sense.

My griefs not only pain me
As a ling'ring disease,
But finding no redress, ferment and rage,
Nor less than wounds immedicable
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,
To black mortification.
Thoughts my tormentors arm'd with deadly
stings
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation which no cooling herb
Or med'cinal liquor can assuage,
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o'er
To death's numbing opium as my only cure.

A Shorter Milton

Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heav'n's desertion.

I was his nursling once and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd by heavenly message twice descending.
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain ;
He led me on to mightiest deeds
Above the nerve of mortal arm
Against the uncircumcis'd, our enemies.
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provok'd,
Left me all helpless with th' irreparable loss
Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated
The subject of their cruelty, or scorn.
Nor am I in the list of them that hope ;
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless ;
This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
No long petition, speedy death,
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

Chor. Many are the sayings of the wise
In ancient and in modern books enroll'd ;
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude ;
And to the bearing well of all calamities,
All chances incident to man's frail life
Consolatories writ
With studied argument, and much persuasion
sought
Lenient of grief and anxious thought,
But with th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune,
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above ;

Samson Agonistes

Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.

God of our fathers, what is man !
That thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly, as thou rul'st
The angelic orders and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute.

Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That wand'ring loose about
Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,
Heads without name no more remember'd,
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
To some great work, thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they effect :
Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft
Amidst their highth of noon,
Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no
regard

Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.

Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,
But throw'st them lower than thou didst exalt
them high,

Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission,
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
Of heathen and profane, their carcasses
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd :
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty

A Shorter Milton

With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases and deform'd,
In crude old age ;
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suff'ring
The punishment of dissolute days, in fine,
Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,
For oft alike, both come to evil end.

So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,
The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg ? how hast thou dealt already ?
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

But who is this, what thing of sea or land ?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles
Of Javan or Gadire
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
Courted by all the winds that hold them play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind ;
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem,
And now at nearer view, no other certain
Than Dalila thy wife.

Sams. My wife, my traitress, let her not come
near me.

Chor. Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes
thee fix'd,

About t' have spoke, but now, with head declin'd
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps

Tarsus, A city of Cilicia in Asia Minor, birthplace of St. Paul.
Javan, Greece. (See note on page 118.) *Gadire*, Cadiz.

Samson Agonistes

And words address'd seem into tears dissolv'd,
Wetting the borders of her silk'n veil :
But now again she makes address to speak.

Dal. With doubtful feet and wavering resolution

I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge ; yet if tears
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slack'n'd, though my
pardon

No way assur'd. But conjugal affection
Prevailing over fear, and timorous doubt
Hath led me on desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate.
If aught in my ability may serve
To light'n what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

Sams. Out, out hyaena ; these are thy wonted
arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feign'd remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail :
Then with more cautious and instructed skill

Hyaena. The hyaena was said to feign the voice of a man in the night and so lead on his victim, only to turn on him and devour him.

A Shorter Milton

Again transgresses, and again submits ;
That wisest and best men full oft beguil'd
With goodness principl'd not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Entangl'd with a pois'rous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off
As I by thee, to ages an example.

Dal. Yet hear me Samson ; not that I endeavour

To lessen or extenuate my offence,
But that on th' other side if it be weigh'd
By itself, with aggravations not surcharg'd,
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd
I may, if possible, thy pardon find
The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.
. First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
In me, but incident to all our sex,
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune
Of secrets, then with like infirmity
To publish them, both common female faults :
Was it not weakness also to make known
For importunity, that is for nought,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety ?
To what I did thou show'dst me first the way.
But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not.
Nor should'st thou have trusted that to woman's
frailty
Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
Let weakness then with weakness come to parle
So near related, or the same of kind,
Thine forgive mine ; that men may censure thine
The gentler, if severely thou exact not

Samson Agonistes

More strength from me, than in thyself was found.
And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,
The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee,
Caus'd what I did ? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou would'st leave
me

As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore
How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest :
No better way I saw than by importuning
To learn thy secrets, get into my power
Thy key of strength and safety : thou wilt say,
' Why then reveal'd ? ' I was assur'd by those
Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd
Against thee but safe custody, and hold :
That made for me, I knew that liberty
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,
While I at home sat full of cares and fears
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed ;
Here I should still enjoy thee day and night
Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philistines',
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.
These reasons in love's law have passed for good,
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps :
And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much
woe,

Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.
Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

Sams. How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine !
That malice not repentance brought thee hither,

A Shorter Milton

By this appears : I gave, thou say'st, th' example,
I led the way ; bitter reproach, but true,
I to myself was false ere thou to me,
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed : which when thou seest
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
Confess it feign'd, weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it, weakness to resist
Philistian gold : if weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it ?
All wickedness is weakness : that plea therefore
With God or man will gain thee no remission.
But love constrain'd thee ; call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust : love seeks to have love ;
My love how could'st thou hope, who took'st the
way

To raise in me inexpiable hate,
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd ?
In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,
Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

Dal. Since thou determin'st weakness for no
plea

In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
What sieges girt me round, ere I consented ;
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,
The constantest to have yielded without blame.
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
That wrought with me : thou know'st the
magistrates

And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urg'd,
Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil duty

Samson Agonistes

And of religion, press'd how just it was,
How honourable, how glorious to entrap
A common enemy, who had destroy'd
Such numbers of our nation : and the priest
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
Preaching how meritorious with the gods
It would be to ensnare an irreligious
Dishonourer of Dagon : what had I
To oppose against such powerful arguments ?
Only my love of thee held long debate ;
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest : at length that grounded
maxim

So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men ; that to the public good
Private respects must yield ; with grave authority
Took full possession of me and prevail'd ;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoining.

Sams. I thought where all thy circling wiles
would end ;
In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy.
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught
thee

Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
I before all the daughters of my tribe
And of my nation chose thee from among
My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,
Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but overpower'd
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing ;
Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband ?
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd :
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave

A Shorter Milton

Parents and country ; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection but my own,
Thou mine, not theirs : if aught against my life
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
Against the law of nature, law of nations,
No more thy country, but an impious crew
Of men conspiring to uphold their state
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
For which our country is a name so dear ;
Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal mov'd
thee ;

To please thy gods thou didst it ; gods unable
To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction
Of their own deity, gods cannot be :
Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd,
These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,
Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear ?

Dal. In argument with men a woman ever
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

Sams. For want of words no doubt, or lack of
breath,

Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

Dal. I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken
In what I thought would have succeeded best.
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson,
Afford me place to show what recompense
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,
Misguided : only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
To afflict thyself in vain : though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance to which

Samson Agonistes

Eyesight exposes daily men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
With me, where my redoubl'd love and care
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
May ever tend about thee to old age
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so suppli'd,
That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt
miss.

Sams. No, no, of my condition take no care ;
It fits not ; thou and I long since are twain ;
Nor think me so unwary or accurst
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught ; I know thy
trains

Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils ;
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms
No more on me have power, their force is null'd,
So much of adder's wisdom I have learnt
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.

If in my flower of youth and strength, when all
men

Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could
hate me

Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me ;
How would'st thou use me now, blind, and
thereby

Deceivable, in most things as a child
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,
And last neglected ? How would'st thou insult
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thraldom, how again betray me,
Bearing my words and doings to the Lords
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile ?

A Shorter Milton

This gaol I count the house of liberty
To thine whose doors my feet shall never enter.

Dal. Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.

Sams. Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake

My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
At distance I forgive thee, go with that ;
Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
Among illustrious women, faithful wives :
Cherish thy hast'n'd widowhood with the gold
Of matrimonial treason : so farewell.

Dal. I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers, than winds and seas, yet winds to seas

Are reconcil'd at length, and sea to shore :
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.
Why do I humble thus myself, and suing
For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate ?
Bid go with evil omen and the brand
Of infamy upon my name denounc'd ?
To mix with thy concernsments I desist
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
Fame if not double-fac'd is double-mouth'd,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds,
On both his wings, one black, th' other white,
Bears greatest names in his wild airy flight.
My name perhaps among the circumcis'd
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defam'd.
With malediction mention'd, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduc'd.
But in my country where I most desire,

Samson Agonistes

In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath
I shall be nam'd among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers.
Not less renown'd than in Mount Ephraim,
Jael, who with inhospitable guile
Smote Sisera sleeping through the temples nail'd.
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
The public marks of honour and reward
Conferr'd upon me, for the piety
Which to my country I was judg'd to have shown.
At this who ever envies or repines
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

Chor. She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

Sams. So let her go, God sent her to debase me,
And aggravate my folly who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.

Chor. Yet beauty, though injurious, hath
strange power,
After offence returning, to regain
Love once possess'd, nor can be easily
Repuls'd, without much inward passion felt
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

Sams. Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord
end,
Not wedlock-treachery endangering life.

Chor. It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,

Jael. See Judges v. 24-31.

A Shorter Milton

Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit
That woman's love can win or long inherit ;
But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,
(Which way soever men refer it)
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
Or seven, though one should musing sit :
If any of these or all, the Timnian bride
Had not so soon preferr'd
Thy paranympth, worthless to thee compar'd,
Successor in thy bed,
Nor both so loosely disally'd
Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgment scant,
Capacity not rais'd to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but oftest to affect the wrong ?
Or was too much of self-love mix'd,
Of constancy no root infix'd,
That either they love nothing, or not long ?
Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
Draws him awry enslav'd
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.

Paranympth, A friend of the bridegroom, who went with him on the wedding day to fetch the bride home.

Samson Agonistes

What pilot so expert but needs must wreck
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm ?

Favour'd of Heav'n who finds
One virtuous rarely found,
That in domestic good combines :
Happy that house ! his way to peace is smooth :
But virtue which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines and most is acceptable above.

Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour :
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, nor dismay'd.
But had we best retire, I see a storm ?

Sams. Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.

Chor. But this another kind of tempest brings.

Sams. Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.

Chor. Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear

The bait of honied words ; a rougher tongue
Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,
The giant Harapha of Gath, his look
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.
Comes he in peace ? what wind hath blown him hither

I less conjecture than when first I saw
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way :
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

Sams. Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

A Shorter Milton

Chor. His fraught we soon shall know, he now arrives.

Har. I come not Samson, to condole thy chance,
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath,
Men call me Harapha, of stock renown'd
As Og or Anak and the Emims old
That Kiriathaim held, thou know'st me now
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd
Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,
That I was never present on the place
Of those encounters, where we might have tri'd
Each other's force in camp or listed field :
And now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.

Sams. The way to know were not to see but taste.

Har. Dost thou already single me ; I thought
Gyves and the mill had tam'd thee ? O that
fortune
Had brought me to the field where thou art
fam'd
To have wrought such wonders with an ass's
jaw ;
I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms,
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown :
So had the glory of prowess been recover'd
To Palestine, won by a Philistine.

Og, An Amoritish king of Bashan, of gigantic stature. He is reputed to have survived the Flood by wading beside the Ark.

Anak, Father of the Anakim; see notes on pages 198 and 210.

Emims, A tribe of gigantic stature, living along the eastern side of the Dead Sea; related to the Anakim.

Gyves, Handcuffs.

Samson Agonistes

The highest name for valiant acts, that honour
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

Sams. Boast not of what thou would'st have
done, but do
What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy
hand.

Har. To combat with a blind man I disdain,
And thou hast need much washing to be touch'd.

Sams. Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me assassinated and betray'd,
Who durst not with their whole united powers
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,
Nor in the house with chamber ambuses
Close-banded durst attack me, no not sleeping,
Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold
Breaking her marriage faith to circumvent me.
Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd
Some narrow place inclos'd, where sight may give
thee,

Or rather flight, no great advantage on me ;
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,
Vant-brass and greaves, and gauntlet, add thy
spear

A weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield,
I only with an oak'n staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd iron,
Which long shall not withhold me from thy head,
That in a little time while breath remains thee,
Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath to boast

Brigandine, A coat of mail.

Habergeon, Mail for the neck and shoulders.

Vant-brass, Armour for the arms.

Greaves, Armour for the legs.

A Shorter Milton

Again in safety what thou would'st have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

Har. Thou durst not thus disparage glorious
arms

Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not spells
And black enchantments, some magician's art
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou
from Heaven

Feign'dst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy
hairs

Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back
Of chaf'd wild boars or ruffl'd porcupines.

Sams. I know no spells, use no forbidden arts ;
My trust is in the living God who gave me
At my nativity this strength, diffus'd
No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,
Than thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,
The pledge of my unviolated vow.

For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
Go to his temple, invoke his aid
With solemnest devotion, spread before him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,
Which I to be the power of Israel's God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
With th' utmost of his godhead seconded :
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

Har. Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be,
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
Quite from his people, and delivered up
Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them

Samson Agonistes

To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send
thee

Into the common prison, there to grind
Among the slaves and asses thy comrades,
As good for nothing else, no better service
With those thy boist'rous locks, no worthy match
For valour to assail, nor by the sword
Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
But by the barber's razor best subdu'd.

Sams. All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve and more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
Whose ear is ever open ; and his eye
Gracious to readmit the suppliant ;
In confidence whereof I once again
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose god is God,
Thine or whom I with Israel's sons adore.

Har. Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in
 trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber.

Sams. Tongue-doughty giant, how dost thou
 prove me these ?

Har. Is not thy nation subject to our lords ?
Their magistrates confessed it, when they took
 thee
As a league-breaker and deliver'd bound
Into our hands : for hadst thou not committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of their robes ? .

Thirty men at Ascalon. See Judges xiv. 11-19.

A Shorter Milton

The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,

Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,
To others did no violence nor spoil.

Sams. Among the daughters of the Philistines I chose a wife, which argu'd me no foe ; And in your city held my nuptial feast : But your ill-meaning politician lords, Under pretence of bridal friends and guests, Appointed to await me thirty spies, Who threat'ning cruel death constrain'd the bride To wring from me and tell to them my secret, That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd. When I perceiv'd all set on enmity, As on my enemies, wherever chanc'd, I us'd hostility, and took their spoil To pay my underminers in their coin. My nation was subjected to your lords. It was the force of conquest ; force with force Is well ejected when the conquer'd can. But I a private person, whom my country As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd Single rebellion and did hostile acts. I was no private but a person rais'd With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n To free my country ; if their servile minds Me their deliverer sent would not receive, But to their masters gave me up for nought, Th' unworthier they ; whence to this day they serve.

I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,
•And had perform'd it if my known offence
Had not disabl'd me, not all your force :
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant

Samson Agonistes

Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,
As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

Har. With thee a man condemn'd, a slave
enroll'd,

Due by the law to capital punishment ?

To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

Sams. Cam'st thou for this, vain boaster, to
survey me,

To descant on my strength, and give thy ver-
dict ?

Come nearer, part not hence so slight inform'd ;
But take good heed my hand survey not thee.

Har. O Baal-zebub ! can my ears unus'd
Hear these dishonours, and not render death ?

Sams. No man withholds thee, nothing from
thy hand

Fear I incurable ; bring up thy van,
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.

Har. This insolence other kind of answer fits.

Sams. Go baffl'd coward, lest I run upon thee,
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down
To the hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.

Har. By Astaroth ere long thou shalt lament
These braveries in irons loaden on thee.

Chor. His giantship is gone, somewhat crest-
fall'n,

Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides,
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.

Sams. I dread him not, nor all his giant brood,
Though fame divulge him father of five sons
All of gigantic size, Goliah chief.

Chor. He will directly to the Lords, I fear,

A Shorter Milton

And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.

Sams. He must allege some cause, and offer'd
fight

Will not dare mention, lest a question rise
Whether he durst accept the offer or not,
And that he durst not plain enough appear'd.
Much more affliction than already felt
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain ;
If they intend advantage of my labours
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping
With no small profit daily to my owners.
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence,
The worst that he can give, to me the best.
Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.

Chor. Oh how comely it is and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppressed !
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour truth ;
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats
With plain heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd,
Their armouries and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless, while
With winged expedition
Swift as the lightning glance he executes

Samson Agonistes

His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd
Lose their defence distracted and amaz'd.

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict,
Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might endu'd
Above the sons of men ; but sight bereav'd
May chance to number thee with those
Whom Patience finally must crown.
This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,

Labouring thy mind
More than the working day thy hands,
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind.
For I descry this way
Some other tending, in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,
Comes on amain, speed in his look.
By his habit I discern him now
A public officer, and now at hand.
His message will be short and voluble.

Off. Hebrews, the pris'ner Samson here I seek.

Chor. His manacles remark him, there he sits.

Off. Samson, to thee our Lords thus bid me
say ;

This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games ;
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,
And now some public proof thereof require
To honour this great feast, and great assembly ;
Rise therefore with all speed and come along,
Where I will see thee hearten'd and fresh clad
To appear as fits before th' illustrious Lords.

A Shorter Milton

Sams. Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them,

Our Law forbids at their religious rites

My presence ; for that cause I cannot come.

Off. This answer, be assur'd, will not content them.

Sams. Have they not sword-players, and ev'ry sort

Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,
But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,
And over-labour'd at their public mill,
To make them sport with blind activity ?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels
On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities ?

Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.

Off. Regard thyself, this will offend them highly.

Sams. Myself ? my conscience and internal peace.

Can they think me so broken, so debas'd
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever
Will condescend to such absurd commands ?
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief
To show them feats, and play before their god,
The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Join'd with extreme contempt ? I will not come.

Off. My message was impos'd on me with speed,
Brooks no delay : is this thy resolution ?

Sams. So take it with what speed thy message needs.

Off. I am sorry what this stoutness will produce

Sams. Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.

Samson Agonistes

Chor. Consider, Samson ; matters now are strain'd

Up to the highth, whether to hold or break ;
He's gone, and who knows how he may report
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame ?
Expect another message more imperious,
More lordly thund'ring than thou well wilt bear.

Sams. Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression, so requite
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols ;
A Nazarite in place abominable
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon ?
Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,
What act more execrably unclean, profane ?

Chor. Yet with this strength thou serv'st the
Philistines,
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean.

Sams. Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful to deserve my food
Of those who have me in their civil power.

Chor. Where the heart joins not, outward acts
defile not.

Sams. Where outward force constrains, the
sentence holds ;
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging ? the Philistine Lords command.
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,
I do it freely ; venturing to displease
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,
Set God behind : which in his jealousy
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.
Yet that he may dispense with me or thee
Present in temples at idolatrous rites

A Shorter Milton

For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.

Chor. How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.

Sams. Be of good courage, I begin to feel Some rousing motions in me which dispose To something extraordinary my thoughts. I with this messenger will go along, Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour Our Law, or stain my vow of Nazarite. If there be aught of presage in the mind, This day will be remarkable in my life By some great act, or of my days the last.

Chor. In time thou hast resolv'd, the man returns.

Off. Samson, this second message from our Lords To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave, Our captive, at the public mill our drudge, And dar'st thou at our sending and command Dispute thy coming ? come without delay ; Or we shall find such engines to assail And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force, Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than a rock.

Sams. I could be well content to try their art, Which to no few of them would prove pernicious. Yet knowing their advantages too many, Because they shall not trail me through their streets

Like a wild beast, I am content to go. Masters' commands come with a power resistless To such as owe them absolute subjection ; And for a life who will not change his purpose ? (So mutable are all the ways of men) Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply Scandalous or forbidden in our Law.

Samson Agonistes

Off. I praise thy resolution, doff these links :
By this compliance thou wilt win the Lords
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

Sams. Brethren farewell, your company along
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them
To see me girt with friends ; and how the sight
Of me as of a common enemy,
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them
I know not. Lords are lordliest in their wine ;
And the well-feasted priest then soonest fir'd
With zeal, if aught religion seem concern'd :
No less the people on their holy-days
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable ;
Happ'n what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our Law, my nation, or myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

Chor. Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his
name
Great among the heathen round :
Send thee the Angel of thy birth, to stand
Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field
Rode up in flames after his message told
Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire ; that Spirit that first rush'd on thee
In the camp of Dan
Be efficacious in thee now at need.
For never was from Heaven imparted
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.
But wherefore comes old Manoah in such haste
With youthful steps ? much livelier than ere
while

A Shorter Milton

He seems : supposing here to find his son,
Or of him bringing to us some glad news ?

Man. Peace with you brethren ; my inducement
hither

Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the Lords new parted hence
To come and play before them at their feast.
I heard all as I came, the city rings
And numbers thither flock, I had no will,
Lest I should see him forc'd to things unseemly.
But that which moved my coming now was chiefly
To give ye part with me what hope I have
With good success to work his liberty.

Chor. That hope would much rejoice us to
partake

With thee ; say reverend Sire, we thirst to hear.

Man. I have attempted one by one the Lords
Either at home, or through the high street passing,
With supplication prone and father's tears
To accept of ransom for my son their pris'ner.
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite ;
That part most reverenc'd Dagon and his priests,
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
Private reward, for which both God and State
They easily would set to sale, a third
More generous far and civil, who confess'd
They had enough reveng'd, having reduc'd
Their foe to misery beneath their fears,
The rest was magnanimity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.
What noise or shout was that ? it tore the sky.

Chor. Doubtless the people shouting to behold
Their once great dread, captive, and blind before
them,

Samson Agonistes

Or at some proof of strength before them shown.

Man. His ransom, if my whole inheritance
May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd down : much rather I shall choose
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,
And he in that calamitous prison left.
No, I am fix'd not to part hence without him.
For his redemption all my patrimony,
If need be, I am ready to forego
And quit : not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

Chor. Fathers are wont to lay up for their
sons,
Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all ;
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son,
Made older than thy age through eyesight lost.

Man. It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, ennobl'd
With all those high exploits by him achiev'd,
And on his shoulders waving down those locks,
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd :
And I persuade me God had not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair
Garrison'd round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose
To use him further yet in some great service,
Not to sit idle with so great a gift
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.
And since his strength with eyesight was not lost,
God will restore him eyesight to his strength.

Chor. Thy hopes are not ill founded nor seem
vain
Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a father's love,
In both which we, as next participate.

A Shorter Milton

Man. I know your friendly minds and—O what noise !

Mercy of Heav'n what hideous noise was that !

Horribly loud unlike the former shout.

Chor. Noise call you it or universal groan
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd,
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

Man. Of ruin indeed methought I heard the noise,

Oh it continues, they have slain my son.

Chor. Thy son is rather slaying them, that outcry

From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

Man. Some dismal accident it needs must be ;
What shall we do, stay here or run and see ?

Chor. Best keep together here, lest running thither

We unawares run into danger's mouth.

This evil on the Philistines is fall'n,

From whom could else a general cry be heard ?

The sufferers then will scarce molest us here,

From other hands we need not much to fear.

What if his eyesight (for to Israel's God

Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,

He now be dealing dole among his foes,

And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way ?

Man. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.

Chor. Yet God hath wrought things as incredible

For his people of old ; what hinders now ?

Man. He can I know, but doubt to think he will ;

Samson Agonistes

Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

Chor. Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;

For evil news rides post, while good news baits.
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,
An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe.

Mess. O whither shall I run, or which way fly

The sight of this so horrid spectacle
Which erst my eyes beheld and yet behold ;
For dire imagination still pursues me.
But providence or instinct of nature seems,
Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce consulted
To have guided me aright, I know not how,
To thee first reverend Manoa, and to these
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horror,
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

Man. The accident was loud, and here before thee

With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not,
No preface needs, thou seest we long to know.

Mess. It would burst forth, but I recover breath
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

Man. Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

Mess. Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are fall'n,

All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

Man. Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest

The desolation of a hostile city.

Mess. Feed on that first, there may in grief be surfeit.

Man. Relate by whom.

A Shorter Milton

Mess. By Samson.

Man. That still lessens

The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

Mess. Ah Manoa, I refrain, too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon ;
Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption
Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

Man. Suspense in news is torture, speak them
out.

Mess. Then take the worst in brief, Samson is
dead.

Man. The worst indeed, O all my hopes de-
feated

To free him hence ! but death who sets all free
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.
What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring
Nipt with the lagging rear of winter's frost.
Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first,
How died he ? death to life is crown or shame.
All by him fell thou say'st, by whom fell he,
What glorious hand gave Samson his death's
wound ?

Mess. Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

Man. Wearied with slaughter then or how ?
explain.

Mess. By his own hands.

Man. Self-violence ? what cause
Brought him so soon at variance with himself
Among his foes ?

Mess. Inevitable cause
At once both to destroy and be destroy'd ;
The edifice where all were met to see him
Upon their heads and on his own he pull'd.

Samson Agonistes

Man. O lastly over-strong against thyself !
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
More than enough we know ; but while things yet
Are in confusion, give us if thou canst,
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
Relation more particular and distinct.

Mess. Occasions drew me early to this city,
And as the gates I enter'd with sunrise,
The morning trumpets festival proclaim'd
Through each high street : little I had dispatch'd
When all abroad was rumour'd that this day
Samson should be brought forth to show the
people

Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games ;
I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded
Not to be absent at that spectacle.

The building was a spacious theatre
Half-round on two main pillars vaulted high,
With seats where all the Lords and each degree
Of sort, might sit in order to behold,
The other side was op'n, where the throng
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand ;
I among these aloof obscurely stood.

The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and
wine,

When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately
Was Samson as a public servant brought,
In their state livery clad ; before him pipes
And timbrels, on each side went armed guards,
Both horse and foot before him and behind
Archers, and slingers, cataphracts and spears.
At sight of him the people with a shout

A Shorter Milton

Rifted the air clamouring their god with praise,
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He patient but undaunted where they led him,
Came to the place, and what was set before him
Which without help of eye, might be assay'd,
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd
All with incredible, stupendous force,
None daring to appear antagonist.

At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars ; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As over-tir'd to let him lean awhile
With both his arms on those two massy pillars
That to the arched roof gave main support.
He unsuspicuous led him ; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclin'd,
And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd,
Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd.
At last with head erect thus cried aloud,
' Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd
I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld.
Now of my own accord such other trial
I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater ;
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.'
This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro,
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came and
drew

The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
Their choice nobility and flower, not only

Samson Agonistes

Of this but each Philistian city round
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson with these immix'd, inevitably
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself ;
The vulgar only 'scap'd who stood without.

Chor. O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious !
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and now ly'st victorious
Among thy slain self-kill'd
Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more
Than all thy life had slain before.

Semichor. While their hearts were jocund and
sublime,
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,
And fat regorg'd of bulls and goats,
Chanting their idol, and preferring
Before our living Dread who dwells
In Silo his bright sanctuary :
Among them he a spirit of frenzy sent,
Who hurt their minds,
And urg'd them on with mad desire
To call in haste for their destroyer ;
They only set on sport and play
Unweetingly importun'd
Their own destruction to come speedy upon
them.
So fond are mortal men
Fall'n into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselves to invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,

Silo. The ark of God remained in Shiloh from the time of
Joshua to that of Eli, over 400 years.

A Shorter Milton

And with blindness internal struck.

Semichor. But he though blind of sight,
Despis'd and thought extinguish'd quite,
With inward eyes illuminated
His fiery virtue rous'd
From under ashes into sudden flame,
And as an ev'ning dragon came,
Assailant on the perched roosts,
And nests in order rang'd
Of tame villatic fowl ; but as an eagle
His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.
So virtue giv'n for lost,
Depress'd, and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begott'n bird
In the Arabian woods embost,
That no second knows nor third,
. And lay ere while a holocaust,
From out her ashy womb now teem'd
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
When most unactive deem'd,
And though her body die, her fame survives,
A secular bird ages of lives.

Man. Come, come, no time for lamentation
now,
Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroicly hath finish'd
A life heroic, on his enemies
Fully reveng'd, hath left them years of mourning,
And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor
Through all Philistian bounds. To Israel
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them

Villatic fowl, Barndoor fowl.

Self-begotten bird, The phœnix. (See note on page 176.)

Caphtor. The Philistines came originally from the island of Crete.

Samson Agonistes

Find courage to lay hold on this occasion,
To himself and father's house eternal fame ;
And which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted from him, as was fear'd,
But favouring and assisting to the end.
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies
Soak'd in his enemies' blood, and from the
stream
With layers pure and cleansing herbs wash off
The clotted gore. I with what speed the while
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends
To fetch him hence and solemnly attend
With silent obsequy and funeral train
Home to his father's house : there will I build
him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung, and acts inroll'd
In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour, and adventures high :
The virgins also shall on feastful days
Visit his tomb with flowers, only bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

Chor. All is best, though we oft doubt,
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.

A Shorter Milton

Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously ; whence Gaza mourns
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent,
His servants he with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event
With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
And calm of mind all passion spent.

Acquist, Acquisition.

SELECTIONS FROM MILTON'S PROSE WORKS

Against the persecution of Books

I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the church and commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men ; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors ; for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are ; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth : and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book ; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image ; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth ; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is true, no age can restore a life, whereof, perhaps, there is no great loss ; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the

A Shorter Milton

living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books ; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom ; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself ; slays an immortality rather than a life.

Areopagitica.

Experience, the test of Virtue

As therefore the state of man now is ; what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear, without the knowledge of evil ? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather ; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure.

Areopagitica.

Prose Works : Selections

Milton's visit to Galileo

And lest some should persuade, lords and commons, that these arguments of learned men's discouragement at this your order are mere flourishes, and not real, I could recount what I have seen and heard in other countries, where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes ; when I have sat among their learned men (for that honour I had) and been counted happy to be born in such a place of philosophic freedom, as they supposed England was, while themselves did nothing but bemoan the servile condition in which learning amongst them was brought : that this was it which had damped the glory of Italian wits ; that nothing had been there written now these many years but flattery and fustian. There it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought. And though I knew that England then was groaning loudest under the prelatical yoke, nevertheless I took it as pledge of future happiness, that other nations were so persuaded of her liberty.

Areopagitica.

The Folly of Press Censorship

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks : methinks

A Shorter Milton

I see her as an eagle mèwing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam ; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance ; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.

What should ye do then, should ye suppress all this flowery crop of knowledge and new light sprung up and yet springing daily in this city ? Should ye set an oligarchy of twenty engrossers over it, to bring a famine upon our minds again, when we shall know nothing but what is measured to us by their bushel ? Believe it, lords and commons ! they who counsel ye to such a suppressing, do as good as bid ye suppress yourselves ; and I will soon show how. If it be desired to know the immediate cause of all this free writing and free speaking, there cannot be assigned a truer than your own mild, and free, and humane government ; it is the liberty, lords and commons, which your own valorous and happy counsels have purchased us ; liberty which is the nurse of all great wits : this is that which hath rarified and enlightened our spirits like the influence of Heaven : this is that which hath enfranchised, enlarged, and lifted up our apprehensions degrees above themselves.

Areopagitica.

Prose Works : Selections

The joys and uses of Education

I shall detain you no longer in the demonstration of what we should not do, but straight conduct ye to a hill-side, where I will point ye out the right path of a virtuous and noble education ; laborious indeed at the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds on every side that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming. I doubt not but ye shall have more ado to drive our dullest and laziest youth, our stocks and stubs, from the infinite desire of such a happy nurture, than we have now to hale and drag our choicest and hopefulllest wits to that asinine feast of sowthistles and brambles which is commonly set before them as all the food and entertainment of their tenderest and most docible age. I call therefore a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war.

On Education.

The Inhabitants of Britain

For Britain, to speak a truth not often spoken, as it is a land fruitful enough of men stout and courageous in war, so it is naturally not over-fertile of men able to govern justly and prudently in peace, trusting only in their mother-wit ; who consider not justly, that civility, prudence, love

A Shorter Milton

of the public good, more than of money or vain honour, are to this soil in a manner outlandish ; grow not here, but in minds well implanted with solid and elaborate breeding, too impolitic else and rude, if not headstrong and intractable to the industry and virtue either of executing or understanding true civil government. Valiant indeed, and prosperous to win a field ; but to know the end and reason of winning, unjudicious and unwise : in good or bad success, alike unteachable. For the sun, which we want, ripens wits as well as fruits ; and as wine and oil are imported to us from abroad, so must ripe understanding, and many civil virtues, be imported into our minds from foreign writings, and examples of best ages : we shall else miscarry still, and come short in the attempts of any great enterprise. Hence did their victories prove fruitless as their losses dangerous : and left them still conquering under the same grievances, that men suffer conquered.

History of Britain.

Discipline

And certainly discipline is not only the removal of disorder ; but if any visible shape can be given to divine things, the very visible shape and image of virtue, whereby she is not only seen in the regular gestures and motions of her heavenly paces as she walks, but also makes the harmony of her voice audible to mortal ears. Yea, the angels themselves, in whom no disorder is feared, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into

Prose Works : Selections

their celestial princedoms and satrapies, according as God himself has writ his imperial decrees through the great provinces of Heaven. The state also of the blessed in Paradise, though never so perfect, is not therefore left without discipline, whose golden surveying reed marks out and measures every quarter and circuit of the New Jerusalem. Yet it is not to be conceived, that those eternal effluences of sanctity and love in the glorified saints should by this means be confined and cloyed with repetition of that which is prescribed, but that our happiness may orb itself into a thousand vagancies of glory and delight, and with a kind of excentrical equation be, as it were, an invariable planet of joy and felicity ; how much less can we believe that God would leave his frail and feeble, though not less beloved church here below, to the perpetual stumble of conjecture and disturbance in this our dark voyage, without the card and compass of discipline ?

Reason of Church Government.

True Religion

I never knew that time in England, when men of truest religion were not counted sectaries : but wisdom now, valour, justice, constancy, prudence united and embodied to defend religion and our liberties, both by word and deed, is counted schism and faction.

Thus in a graceless age things of pious praise

Sectaries, Those who disagreed with the teaching of the established church.

A Shorter Milton

and imitation under a right name, to make them infamous and hateful to the people, are mis-called. Certainly, if ignorance and perverseness will needs be national and universal, then they who adhere to wisdom and to truth, are not therefore to be blamed, for being so few as to seem a sect or faction. But in my opinion it goes not ill with that people where these virtues grow so numerous and well joined together, as to resist and make head against the rage and torrent of that boisterous folly and superstition, that possesses and hurries on the vulgar sort. This therefore we may conclude to be a high honour done us from God, and a special mark of his favour, whom he hath selected as the sole remainder, after all these changes and commotions, to stand upright and steadfast in his cause ; dignified with the defence of truth and public liberty ; while others, who aspired to be the top of the zealots, and had almost brought religion to a kind of trading monopoly, have not only by their late silence and neutrality belied their profession, but foundered themselves and their consciences, to comply with enemies in that wicked cause and interest, which they have too often cursed in others, to prosper now in the same themselves.

Eikonoklastes.

England's Gratitude to God

O how much more glorious will those former deliverances appear, when we shall know them not only to have saved us from great miseries past,

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but to have reserved us for greatest happiness to come ! Hitherto thou hast but freed us, and that not fully, from the unjust and tyrannous claim of thy foes ; now unite us entirely, and appropriate us to thyself, tie us everlasting in willing homage to the prerogative of thy eternal throne. . . .

Then, amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one may perhaps be heard offering at high strains in new and lofty measure to sing and celebrate thy divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land throughout all ages ; whereby this great and warlike nation, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her whole vices, may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day, when thou, the eternal and shortly expected king, shall open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and distributing national honours and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shall put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth ; where they undoubtedly, that by their labours, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall receive above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities, legions, and thrones in their glorious titles, and in supereminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever.

Of Reformation in England.

A Shorter Milton

The relationship of human nature and divine truth

If any, therefore, who shall hap to read this discourse, hath been through misadventure ill engaged in this contracted evil here complained of, and finds the fits and workings of a high impatience frequently upon him ; of all those wild words which men in misery think to ease themselves by uttering, let him not open his lips against the providence of Heaven, or tax the ways of God and his divine truth ; for they are equal, easy, and not burdensome ; nor do they ever cross the just and reasonable desires of men, nor involve this our portion of mortal life into a necessity of sadness and malcontent, by laws commanding over the unreducible antipathies of nature, sooner or later found, but allow us to remedy and shake off those evils into which human error hath led us through the midst of our best intentions, and to support our incident extremities by that authentic precept of sovereign charity, whose grand commission is to do and to dispose over all the ordinances of God to man, that love and truth may advance each other to everlasting.

Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.

‘*The good old Cause*’

What I have spoken, is the language of that which is not called amiss ‘*The good old Cause*’ :

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if it seem strange to any, it will not seem more strange, I hope, than convincing to backsliders. Thus much I should perhaps have said, though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones ; and had none to cry to, but with the prophet, ' O earth, earth, earth ! ' To tell the very soil itself, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. Nay, though what I have spoke should happen (which thou suffer not, who didst create mankind free ! nor thou next, who didst redeem us from being servants of men !) to be the last words of our expiring liberty. But I trust I shall have spoken persuasion to abundance of sensible and ingenuous men ; to some, perhaps, whom God may raise from these stones to become children of reviving liberty ; and may reclaim, though they seem now, choosing them a captain back for Egypt, to bethink themselves a little, and consider whither they are rushing ; to exhort this torrent also of the people, not to be so impetuous, but to keep their due channel ; and at length recovering and uniting their better resolutions, now that they see already how open and unbounded the insolence and rage is of our common enemies, to stay the ruinous proceedings, justly and timely fearing to what a precipice of destruction the deluge of this epidemic madness would hurry us, through the general defection of a misguided and abused multitude.

*Ready and Easy Way to establish a
Free Commonwealth.*

A Shorter Milton

In praise of Cromwell

(*This passage, translated from one of Milton's Latin pamphlets, shows his admiration for the Lord Protector*)

In this state of desolation, to which we were reduced, you, O Cromwell ! alone remained to conduct the government, and to save the country. We all willingly yield the palm of sovereignty to your unrivalled ability and virtue, except the few among us, who, either ambitious of honours which they have not the capacity to sustain, or who envy those which are conferred on one more worthy than themselves, or else who do not know that nothing in the world is more pleasing to God, more agreeable to reason, more politically just, or more generally useful, than that the supreme power should be vested in the best and wisest of men. Such, O Cromwell, all acknowledge you to be ; such are the services which you have rendered, as the leader of our councils, the general of our armies, and the father of your country. For this is the tender appellation by which all the good among us salute you from the very soul. Other names you neither have nor could endure ; and you deservedly reject that pomp of title which attracts the gaze and admiration of the multitude. For what is a title but a certain definite mode of dignity ; but actions such as yours surpass, not only the bounds of our admiration, but our titles ; and, like the points of pyramids, which are lost in the clouds, they soar above the possibilities of titular commendation. . . .

Often reflect what a dear pledge the beloved

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land of your nativity has entrusted to your care ; and that liberty which she once expected only from the chosen flower of her talents and her virtues, she now expects from you only, and by you only hopes to obtain. Revere the fond expectations which we cherish, the solicitudes of your anxious country ; revere the looks and the wounds of your brave companions in arms, who, under your banners, have so strenuously fought for liberty ; revere the shades of those who perished in the contest ; revere also the opinions and the hopes which foreign states entertain concerning us, who promise to themselves so many advantages from that liberty which we have so bravely acquired, from the establishment of that new government which has begun to shed its splendour on the world, which, if it be suffered to vanish like a dream, would involve us in the deepest abyss of shame ; and lastly, revere yourself ; and, after having endured so many sufferings and encountered so many perils for the sake of liberty, do not suffer it, now it is obtained, either to be violated by yourself, or in any one instance impaired by others. You cannot be truly free unless we are free too : for such is the nature of things, that he who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own and become a slave.

Second Defence of the People of England.

**PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE PRESS OF THE PUBLISHERS**

